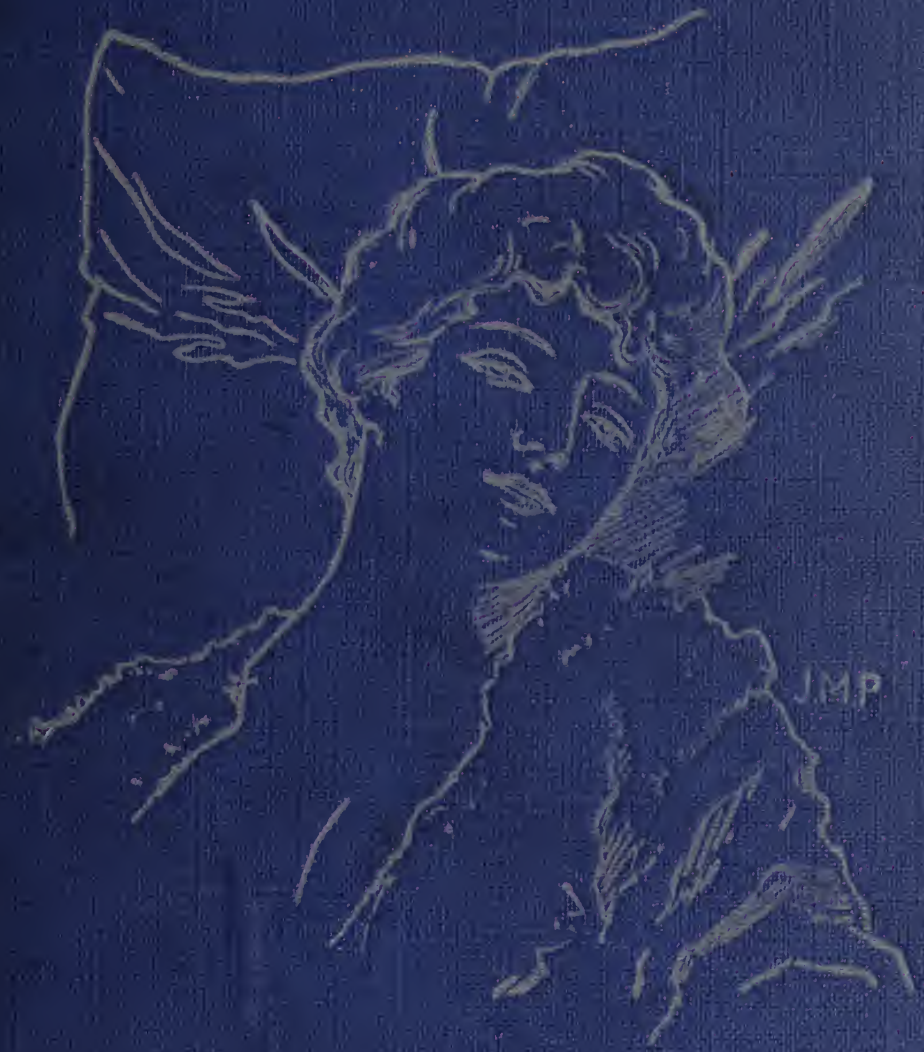
MY BOHEMIAN DAYS IN LONDON



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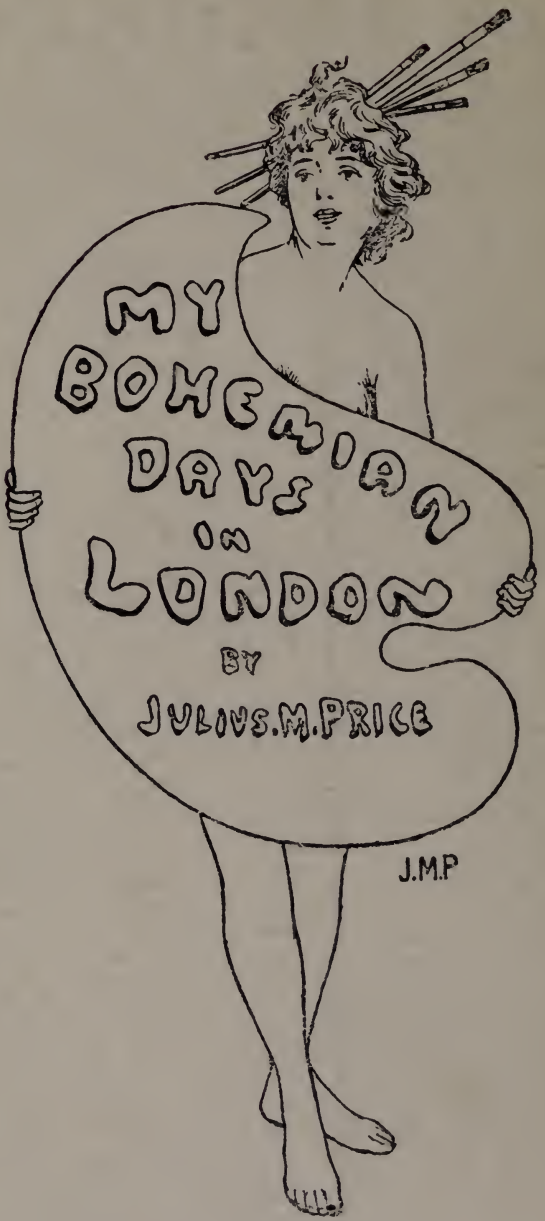
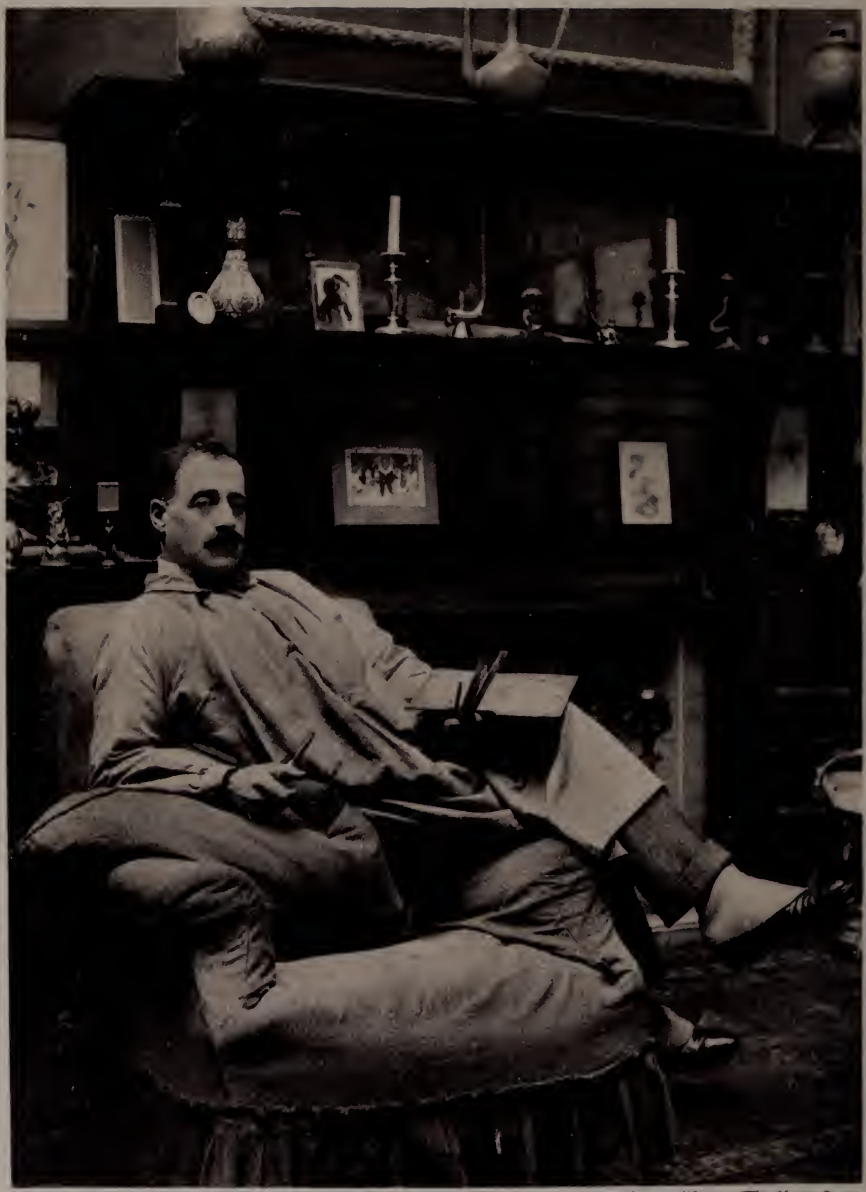


Ulrich Middeldorf

MY BOHEMIAN DAYS IN LONDON



From a photograph by Arthur Hawes, The Mall, Ealing

The Author in his studio, 22 Golden Square.

MY BOHEMIAN DAYS IN LONDON

BY

JULIUS M. PRICE

AUTHOR OF "MY BOHEMIAN DAYS IN PARIS," ETC.

WITH 32 ILLUSTRATIONS
BY THE AUTHOR
AND PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

PHILADELPHIA

DAVID McKAY, PUBLISHER

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In the passage of years I have made many friends; to all these friends I dedicate this little book.

J. M. P.

PREFACE

In falling in with the suggestion made to me by my publisher that I should write a further volume on my Bohemian days I found myself confronted with the perplexing question as to when one's "Bohemian days" can really be said to have ended, for I have always been inclined to think that "once a Bohemian, always a Bohemian." Of course, I do not refer to the state of affairs which is a dreadful reality to many a struggling artist, and from which through force of circumstances, there is no getting away—to such the word is but a synonym for penury, and there can be little romance in connection with it, in London at any rate. There is another form of Bohemianism not associated with actual poverty that appeals so strongly to some men, that long after youth is passed, and when they are in a position to live as ordinary citizens, they still remain under its spell. It might be termed the fascination of the unconventional, were it not that unconventionality is almost inherent, and is largely a matter of temperament and climatic influence. My souvenirs, as will be seen, relate more specially to this phase of Bohemian life.

In writing of the years I spent in St John's Wood, I realise that my Paris experiences of artistic Bohemianism helped in no small degree to impart

a sort of reflected Parisian lustre on my London studio, and made me perhaps take a somewhat different view of life in those days to what I should have done had I never lived abroad. It was not exactly looking at things through rose-coloured glasses, but with a certain sense of the romantic which had developed in the Quartier Latin and Montmartre. I lay no claim to having discovered any *terra incognita*, as I feel sure that to many men of my age, much of what I have described of the doings in the "Wood" in the mid 'eighties and early 'nineties, must have been to a certain extent familiar, but I venture to hope that my own personal reminiscences will prove of some interest, if only as affording a glimpse of studio life and a Bohemianism which is now but a memory.

This volume is intended as a sequel to "My Bohemian Days in Paris," so in conclusion I would add in the words of a once famous advertisement, "If you like the pickles try the sauce."

J. M. P.

22 GOLDEN SQUARE,
LONDON, W.

[*NOTE.—The author had no opportunity of correcting the proofs of this book, as he was at the war while it was being printed.*]

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MY BOHEMIAN DAYS IN LONDON

CHAPTER I

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IT was with mingled feelings of regret and trepidation that I returned to London after the four never-to-be-forgotten years I had spent as a student in Paris, for I realised that my boisterous days of youthful *insouciance* were over, and that arduous uphill work was facing me. Henceforth I had to pull myself together and rely entirely on my own efforts to carve out for myself a career in the precarious profession I had chosen. The situation I had to face was to me almost tragic, the small income on which I had hitherto depended for daily bread and butter, and an occasional pot of jam, had been snatched away from me through a financial failure, and I found myself practically on my beam-ends with no option but to start out at once and work for my living.

The seriousness of this will be only appreciated

by those, who like myself, through no fault of their own, have found themselves in similar circumstances. The question now was, what was to be done and how to begin? I was little more than a youth, and had been brought up with the idea that I should never have to depend on my art for a livelihood; young as I was I had already learned that, as a profession, art was not a money-maker to be relied upon. I knew from what I had seen in Paris that it was a lottery in which the prizes are few and the blanks many. It was too late, however, for me to think of taking up one of the many trades or professions which might offer more lucrative promise. I had no inclination for any other than an artistic career; nought remained, therefore, but to make the best of things and put my back to the wall.

Before leaving Paris, in order to avoid expense of packing, I had decided to sell my modest furniture and household goods, though I must admit that it was not without an acute pang of regret that I was forced to come to this decision, and when I saw everything being taken away it was almost like parting with old friends, and I felt a choking feeling in my throat. What stories of tender romance, of heart-burnings, of joys and sorrows these insignificant Lares and Penates could have told; the poor little fauteuils seemed as though holding out their arms to me in mute adieu — all were associated with my innermost recollection of all the romance in my student days, alas! now over. It was useless repining, so I stiffened my back and endeavoured to persuade myself, much against my own conviction, that it was Kismet, and always for the best.

I arrived in London, therefore, with absolutely no belongings; with no souvenirs of my Paris life beyond my personal effects, my paint-box, sketch easel, camp stool, and a big bundle of canvases. I certainly could not, therefore, under any circumstances, have

been considered a possessor of worldly goods and chattels.

Everything seemed very strange and cheerless to me at first I remember, as I had no home to go to, and but few relations or friends in London, so I felt almost like a traveller in some foreign city; but I had made up my mind that there was no time to be lost, and I was in a feverish hurry to make a start. The day after my arrival then saw me searching for rooms. I had been recommended to look round St John's Wood as being a most likely place to suit me and my exiguous purse, so I decided not to be fastidious, and settle on anything so long as it was clean, and at any rate make a beginning.

In the 'eighties St John's Wood was the quarter most favoured by artists, and although this explained to a certain extent how I found my way up there, I cannot help feeling now that it was also the peculiar notoriety of the district that attracted me. There was in those days an *éclat* about the very name that raised visions of a repetition in London of the joyous times I had spent in Paris, and I must confess now, that as a substitute for the Montmartre of my student days, I found St John's Wood in the 'eighties not altogether out of the running. Of course it was but a quiet suburb, and had none of the life or go of the French Quartier, but there was, as will be seen, plenty of fun and adventure there for those who were so minded, whilst as a place for work it was positively delightful in its almost rural quietude.

I found a nice bed-sitting-room on the second floor in Wellington Road in a small semi-detached house, with a garden back and front, for which I paid the modest sum of 10s. a week, including my breakfast, and an ample one at that; cheap enough in all conscience sake, but there was a somewhat curious little incident that perhaps explained how

I came to be thus favoured, for Wellington Road was not usually so inexpensive in the way of lodgings.

When I went to make enquiries about the room to let, the door was opened by the landlady herself, a buxom fair-haired person of uncertain age, got up "lamb fashion." She had a certain flirtatious look, and gave me an unmistakable "St John's Wood glad-eye," as she invited me in to see the room, which as it turned out suited me very well. It was the only one she let, so she told me, as she was a widow, and could not afford to keep servants; but the rent of it was 15s. a week, and was more than I wanted to give, and I told her so. She seemed disappointed rather than annoyed when she learned this.

To my surprise, as I was going downstairs she suddenly said that she would reduce it to 10s. if I would take it at once, as she felt she was sure she would like to have me as her lodger, and then to my still further surprise she added, "that will of course include your breakfast as well." This was too tempting an offer to refuse, so I accepted without hesitation. I was young then, and perhaps somewhat dense at times, anyhow I arranged to move in that day. As I was passing through the hall I noticed a man's hat hanging on the hat-stand with a very truculent looking stick near it. Somehow I did not like the look of them, they had an aggressive air; the owner I thought could not be an agreeable sort of gentleman. However, I wasn't obliged to know him, so it didn't really matter, so I said nothing, but it struck me as somewhat strange to see them as though quite in their accustomed place after what she had told me about herself. Well, I moved in and found my room very clean and comfortable, and forgot all about the hat and stick for the moment.

I was busy the next week or so hunting for a cheap studio, and was out most of the time, so had not much opportunity for chatting with her, much as she would have liked me to, as I could not fail to notice, for she was a most loquacious and skittish person, and seemed to be always on the slightest excuse waiting to pounce out on me whenever I came in at any time, even late at night. As I went up to my room she would open the door of her bedroom, and peeping out coyly, ask me kindly if I had all I required. At times almost whispering tenderly that I must not mind asking her for anything I fancied, as she wanted me to be quite happy and feel myself at home.

I often think of a glimpse I got of her on one of these occasions. The light of the candle I was carrying lit up her face with startling effect as she stood in the half-open door of her bedroom, arrayed in a flimsy sort of dressing-gown which only partially hid her ample figure. To my youthful eyes, fresh from Paris, and with the recollections still vivid in my memory of my delightfully young and piquant *petites amies*, this middle-aged *passée* individual, old enough to be my mother, with her dyed hair, pasty face, and sickly provocative leer was as a sort of vision of another world, which was new to me, and I hastily thanked her, and felt relieved when I found myself in my room, and with the door bolted. I remember I almost felt afraid she would come after me and try to get in.

The next morning she laughingly twitted me about coming in so late, and said that I had no doubt learned some bad habits in Paris, which by all accounts was a very "naughty place" — not that she minded what people did if they chose to — and, in fact, she rather approved of youth having its fling, she added significantly. I did not feel inclined to discuss the subject with her, but

she was quite a character in her way, and it was most difficult to stop her talking once she started. Still, I could have forgiven her a good deal, for she was a kindly motherly person once she forgot her aspirations to be considered a young and beautiful girl.

One morning whilst I was having breakfast, which by the way she let me have in her own sitting-room, I asked casually about her other lodger—that I had not seen anything of him. "Her other lodger!" she exclaimed with surprise. "What other lodger?"

"The one whose hat and stick are in the hall."

Then to my intense surprise she suddenly burst into tears, and letting herself drop into an arm-chair by the fire she buried her face in her hands and sobbed hysterically. I was so taken aback that I did not know what to say; all that I could do was to assure her as sympathetically as I could that I was very sorry indeed if I had said anything to upset her—that it was quite unintentional on my part, and so forth—and then I sat and waited until the crisis passed.

In a few minutes she became calm again, and smiled sadly at me through her tear-dimmed eyes. I shall never forget what she looked like. She was not beautiful at any time of the day, and in the early morning least of all, and moreover she had a fancy for an excessive amount of a peculiarly white face powder, so the effect of her tears on this pastel-like surface may be imagined; they had formed little lines all over her cheeks. I should have laughed outright had it not been that I realised her grief was quite real and unassumed.

"You must forgive me making such a show of myself; I know it's very silly of me," she said, as she mopped her streaming eyes again and again with her wet handkerchief; "but I could not help it — I feel so lonely and miserable at times. That was his hat and stick, the poor old dear, just as

he left them before he was taken ill—he has been dead ten years now, and I haven't the heart to move them. I feel somehow as though he is still about the house when I see them out in the hall in their old place, and sometimes when I am all alone I go out there and sit and talk with them. It is very silly I know; but somehow it seems to relieve me."

I said nothing; the mirth her woe-begone appearance had roused in me disappeared, and I felt a deep pang of sympathy in my heart for her, and I realised that behind her skittishness and frivolity was anyhow the heart of a real woman.

From this moment her manner towards me completely changed, she abandoned her captivating and alluring ways, and turned out to be so kindly and homely a creature that I was positively loathe to leave her, when I decided to move into a studio. I have often thought since, and with a certain regret of the cosy sitting-room with its cheerful fire when I came down to breakfast; how she would fuss around and make me comfortable, and tell me all the news, and talk about my work of the day. She was indeed a "find" as a landlady, and there are probably few like her nowadays in St John's Wood.

My search for a cheap studio was not an easy one, considering how little I was prepared to pay. My Paris experience had spoiled me in this respect, and I soon discovered that it was a complete impossibility to get anything at all in London for the same rent I paid in Montmartre. The reason for this was not difficult to explain. In the artists' quarter of Paris the landlords often build with a view to attracting artists, and studios with north lights are to be found readily throughout the district. In London this was quite the exception in the days of which I am writing, and if there happened to be a large room in a house facing north, which

could be converted into a studio, a fancy price was immediately asked.

A comparison between the rents of London and Paris of that time may be of interest. I shared a studio with a friend in the Passage Lathuile in the Avenue de Clichy, for which we paid £15 a year. It certainly was not pretentious or extremely commodious, but it answered our purpose well, as it was on the ground floor, and had a good light. For £25 a year we could have easily found quite a luxurious place with bedroom and dressing-room. In London, in St John's Wood, such rents were unknown, and even for a small workshop in a mews a much higher figure would be cheerfully asked, whilst one had to be getting on very well to afford a real studio.

Of course as against this must be considered the fact that if one got on only fairly well, the prices obtainable for one's work ruled much higher than across the Channel—still it was purely problematical whether one did ever get on sufficiently to even make a living by art, leave alone pay an exorbitant rent. I realised, therefore, that for the first few years, whilst endeavouring to make headway, it practically meant working for one's landlord most of the time—a thankless task, as will be admitted. Still there was no help for it, so I continued my search with unabated energy buoyed up with a dogged determination to see it through, if with hard work it were possible.

I was particularly keen on settling in St John's Wood, as the district had, as I have said, somehow appealed to me from the very first, and after many days of fruitless search for cheap rooms or a workshop that could be converted into a studio, I suddenly heard of a furnished studio at 36 Marlboro' Hill, which was to let for a year at a very reasonable rental to a responsible tenant. I was indeed in luck's way, as it turned out to be the very sort of

place I had been looking for, and could not have been better suited for my purpose, since I had no furniture whatever.

The owner, a rather well-known painter, Ponsonby Staples, was not exacting in his idea of rent, since he was only asking £50 for a twelve months' tenancy, which was indeed remarkably cheap considering the place was completely furnished, in fact there was everything an artist could reasonably require, even to crockery, such as it was, and a gas-cooking stove. It was arranged with the artistic taste one might have expected from a man of Staples' reputation.

The premises, which were on the ground floor, and were separate from the house, consisted of a large studio with top light, an alcove with a bed in it, and a sort of annexe which had been converted into a kitchen. There was a tiny little garden at the back in which, at a pinch, one could make open-air studies, and there were two entrances, one at the front and the other at the back through the garden. It was a delightfully cheery place, and appeared still more so on the sunny spring morning I visited it.

Without hesitation I signed the agreement, and entered into possession at once, and it was with the most pleasurable feelings that I moved in. My sympathetic landlady in Wellington Road was, I believe, genuinely sorry to lose me; but she agreed that it was a stroke of luck having dropped on such a place at all. She made me promise to come in and see her, and have a cup of tea whenever I felt I should like to have a change and a quiet chat.

As I have said, the studio was ready for immediate occupation—in fact, Staples had left all his belongings lying about in the most unconventional manner, very different to what one would have expected from one's landlord. If

I remember rightly, he did not even make an inventory of what was in the place. All I had to do, therefore, was to move a canvas or so, put my own studies on the easels, get out my paint-box and start work without further delay. It was very delightful, and I was quite buoyed up with enthusiasm; although I was surrounded by some one else's belongings, everything was so in unison with my own ideas that it was as though I had furnished and fitted it all up myself. Moreover, Staples had, like myself, studied abroad, so there was the added charm of a certain continental touch which struck me as soon as I entered the place, and which not a little had induced me to take it.

I had, as I have explained, nothing in the world except my personal belongings, and did not wish to encroach on my tiny capital, if I could possibly help it, by buying anything except actual necessities for the moment, and in this resolve I was strenuously backed up by my *ci-devant* guardian, an uncle of mine named Jephson, a middle-aged bachelor, who, after living many years in China and Japan, had retired and settled down in London. He lived sufficiently close to St John's Wood to afford him an excuse for a daily stroll round to Marlboro' Hill to see how I was getting on. Despite the disparity in our ages we soon became the staunchest of chums, and it was mainly due to his sound advice that I managed to pull through as I did, for it was hard and uphill work at first.

"Dear old Jeph!" as he was always affectionately called—I can see him now — so spruce and well-groomed, and it was at all times a delight and a source of inward merriment to me to watch him fussing about the studio, good-naturedly doing his best to be of assistance to me in one way or another, without soiling his immaculate attire. He was at

heart a bit of a *dilletante*, and I fancy he really imagined he was getting on closer terms with art when sitting about the studio trying to smoke a big pipe, which never agreed with him, or helping to prepare a little Bohemian lunch.

One day comes back to me. Some friends arrived when he was busily occupied in the kitchen, and he hadn't heard the bell ring. He had been in there some little time, and, curiosity as to the reason leading us to peep through the door, imagine our amusement at finding Jeph in his shirt sleeves, the charwoman's apron about his dapper figure, with lemon-coloured kid gloves on, intently engaged trying his hand at making what he was pleased afterwards to inform us was a curry as his "boy" used to make it in Shanghai.

His was a personality between the level-headedness of the travelled man of the world and the irresponsible impetuosity of one who in middle-age has not outgrown his youth, which was strangely fascinating. Beyond all was his cheery optimism, which helped me to bear many disillusions and disappointments, and assisted considerably to cheer up my early studio days in London.

CHAPTER II

My first experience of Bohemian life in London—Of living as compared with Paris—The saloon bars and the "shilling ordinary"—The London charwoman—Her French prototype—My first commission—A lady visitor—A delightful afternoon—Commencement of a little romance—Painting in my back garden—Sudden ending of the romance.

I CAN conceive nothing less calculated to fire one with romantic thoughts than the feeling of being suddenly thrown on one's own resources—as I was at this time. Even now, after the lapse of so many years, I can vividly recall my misgivings as to how my experiment with regard to taking a studio would turn out. I was always of a very impressionable temperament, and it takes but little to depress or elate me, and so it happened at this juncture after the excitement of moving in.

For the next few days I had a fit of the blues at the mere thought of the strenuous task that faced me and the £50 rent assumed brobdingnagian proportions in my vivid imagination. I had a sudden and wild dread that hard times were going to replace the joyous years of my Paris life, and I feared that it would require far more energy than I possessed to get over them. This vague presentiment, fortunately for me, was not borne out by results, for although, like many young artists, I had continual ups and downs, I found that if I could "keep my pecker up," things generally turned out all right, as will be seen.

There being nothing to be gained by sitting down imagining the worst, I had started work on a sketch

one morning a few days after I had settled down when Jeph turned up unexpectedly, and to my delight explained the reason of his matutinal visit. Like the good fellow he was, he had spoken to a friend about me, and interested him so much in me and my work that I was to go round and see him at once, and probably he would commission me to paint something for his billiard-room. As may be imagined, I didn't require much persuading, and, well to cut the story short, I got an order there and then for a couple of small pictures—and this was practically the commencement of my studio life. I cannot remember now what I was paid for these pictures, but I can recollect how proud I felt at already having real work in hand, and practically making a start at earning a living by my brush, though I didn't allow myself to be led into wild extravagance merely on the strength of my little stroke of good luck.

I had already found before I had been many days in the studio that actual living was more expensive in London than in Paris, and that notwithstanding the fact that provisions as a whole in France were considerably dearer than in England. The only explanation of the apparent mystery is doubtless the superior genius of the French in making the best of and utilising everything in the shape of food.

The Englishman's old jibe against French kickshaws may have some foundation in fact, but to the young student of small purse and large appetite the selfsame kickshaws, at the price at which they are dispensed on the other side of the Channel, are by no means to be despised. The fare one got at the English eating-houses at the time of which I am writing may have been, and probably was, very filling and satisfying for the money, but to any one like myself, who had lived in Paris, and had acquired a somewhat artistic taste in the matter of flavouring, was a very poor substitute for what they served you at even the most humble of *marchands de vin* over there.

For the first few weeks, till I was fixed up, I used to go out for my lunch to some public-house close by, as there was nothing in the way of a restaurant anywhere in the district, and I can well remember how repugnant to me it was to have to do so; more perhaps on account of the idea of frequenting a "pub" than by reason of the actual food, which was always fairly good, though very humble, whilst of course there was not much variety.

At a house called "The Knights of St John" in Queen's Terrace, where several artists used to gather for lunch, they gave you quite a good "shilling ordinary," consisting of a cut from the joint, two vegetables, and sweets or cheese which, washed down with "half of stout and bitter," was satisfying enough in quantity at any rate, even for my appetite which, in those days was, I remember, enormous. But it was only "feeding," or as we called it "stoking," pure and simple, and you had to be really hungry to enjoy it.

I do not think that, even in those days, I could have been accused of putting on "side"; but the contrast between the charming little Paris restaurants I had got so accustomed to and these rough and ready public-house bars, was so great that I made up my mind to avoid them as much as possible. I therefore decided always to feed in the studio if I could manage it, as I felt that however rough and ready the meals would be, at any rate they would be preferable to going out every day.

In order to carry out this resolve, it was necessary to find a servant of some description, and I thus made my first acquaintance with the genus charwoman—an individual I have long since come to believe to be absolutely indigenous and peculiar to England. She certainly, so far as my experience goes, has no counterpart in France, where the wife of one's *concierge*, if she is a decent sort, may for a small monthly consideration, usually about 4s.

(5 francs), come and clean your place up and get you your morning *café* and roll. If you are differently situated you may for an equally reasonable honorarium obtain the services of a *femme de ménage*, but in either case you will have a person working for you who for the nonce is your employee, and is an industrious, cleanly, sober person, and, above all, dressed in keeping with her position.

In England, as I was not long in discovering, the prototype of the French *femme de ménage* is usually an impudent, frowsy individual of middle-age, with a marked taste for beer, and for attiring herself in shabby finery. Unfortunately for the struggling artist who has to make his home in his studio, this unpleasant type is a necessity, unless he is prepared to carry his Bohemianism to the extent of cleaning up his place and doing for himself. I was not inclined for this, so had perforce to find some one to come in every morning to tidy up and get me my breakfast and lunch. I was told that 7s. per week was the very least I could get any one to come for, which was of course 3s. more than I paid for the same work in Paris; but the number of applicants I got for the job, even at this figure, was sufficient to prove that "charing" was a popular occupation in the neighbourhood.

The person I eventually selected was typical of her class, and indeed quite a character in her way. She had already worked for an artist, so fancied she was familiar with studio life, and never missed an opportunity to let me know it if I gave her the slightest encouragement to talk. Models in her eyes were depraved hussies, so she told me once, and "she would not sit for the figure, no—not if the King of England asked her." Needless to add, I was never tempted to induce her to alter her resolve.

She hadn't been with me a week before I realised that on the slightest provocation she could be so

insolent that one had almost to ask as a favour for anything to be done, that her other artist, who "was a gentleman, God bless him," didn't require. Well I kept her on for a time, as it gave me a good opportunity to have a look round and get used to the neighbourhood, and gradually to make arrangements for having my meals in the studio. Cooking, however, was not her *forte*, perhaps her former artist had been a nut eater, as the meals she served me were of the roughest description, and required the healthy appetite of a young man to negotiate.

My next charwoman experience was not much more satisfactory—perhaps it was that I had been spoiled when living in Paris—anyhow it took me some time to get used to the various specimens I had to put up with in the commencement of my studio life in London.

Those early days in St John's Wood were singularly uneventful, probably because my friends had not yet learned my whereabouts, so it was rather dull at first sitting about all day alone, and without even a ring at the bell to liven one up, for I didn't care to go out in the day-time in case any one should call during my absence.

Still there was always a chance of something turning up, as I soon discovered, and it was this expectancy that relieved the monotony of many a quiet day, and in this connection I recall what was quite a little event in its way—my first lady visitor, a model. This incident, trivial as it may have seemed at first, is indelibly marked on my memory, as, curiously enough, it developed all the elements of a little romance, and such it undoubtedly was whilst it lasted. It came about this way.

It was about four o'clock one wet afternoon, and I had been absolutely alone all day, not a soul to speak to, when there came a ring at the bell. I went to open the door, my palette in hand—a little

"SHE HAD MY FAVOURITE COLOUR HAIR—AUBURN."

trick of my Paris studio life, so as to make one appear busy in case it was an unwelcome visitor—when I saw it was a very nice-looking girl outside.

"Do you want a model?" she asked.

I was so pleased to have a visitor at all that I invited her in, and said I would take her address down in my model book. More for form's sake than anything else I asked her to take off her hat, and then saw she had my favourite colour hair—auburn. I cannot recollect what suggested it, but I think it was about tea-time and the tea-things were laid, anyhow I asked her if she would care for a cup of tea, and she accepted without hesitation—in fact I thought she was pleased at the invitation.

Somehow I always felt a little bit sorry for girls who made their living tramping from studio to studio, and in all weathers: it had always struck me as being a wearisome and thankless task at the best of times, apart from the precarious nature of the work. In the case of an extremely pretty and delicate type of girl, as this one was, it seemed almost a shame that she should go round by herself amongst a lot of strange men thus. Of course it was in the interests of Art (with the usual big "A"); but I could not help thinking how many men would have gladly welcomed her, even if she hadn't said she was an artist's model.

Whether it was the tea, or my frankly unconventional manner, I cannot of course tell, but at any rate we were not long before we got on quite friendly terms, more so perhaps than the object of her visit warranted, and I found her a most charming personality. To my surprise she informed me she had only just taken up sitting, and that she had been a nursery governess; but had got tired of the humdrum life of looking after a lot of noisy children and being treated like a servant. So when one day a girl friend of hers, who was a model, told her she could make a good living by sitting, she had thought

it over, and decided to try her luck and go round the studios.

With the aid of a Royal Academy catalogue she had made out a lot of addresses of artists likely to want models, and that was how she had come to my studio, because of course my landlord's name was in the book, as he was a constant exhibitor. She was so delightfully frank and ingenuous about it all that I remember I contrasted her in my mind with the vivacious, but, often so artificial, *petites femmes* one saw in the Paris *ateliers*, and the comparison was not entirely in their favour perhaps, for she harmonised with the grey surroundings of the secluded St John's Wood street and my particular mood at the moment. In Paris, pretty though she was, she would probably have passed unnoticed; they want *chic* as well as beauty over there, and very few English girls possess it.

I could not resist the temptation to ask her her impression of studio life, which must have been so different to what she had been accustomed to previously, and was much amused at some of her experiences with artists, for it is always interesting to learn how others see us.

I recollect one little adventure she told me she had had at the very commencement of her taking up sitting, which appeared to me to cast a lurid light on the so-called "artistic temperament."

It was, she said, almost the first time she sat, and it was to a young man. He seemed to be at first as quiet and as mild a person as possible; she had been sitting for what appeared to her quite a long while, in a very strained and unnatural position, doing her best to keep as still as possible; but he was evidently not satisfied either with his work or her, and she heard him muttering and swearing to himself whilst painting. Suddenly, to her surprise, he jumped up, seized his paint knife and scraped off all his morning's work, and then flung his palette and brushes on the

floor, stamped on them with rage, smashing them to pieces. He behaved just like a lunatic, and she was too frightened to say anything; she thought he had taken leave of his senses and didn't know what was going to happen next. After a few minutes he calmed down, told her she might dress, paid her, and said she had better go—that he was no good at painting, and would chuck it and take up bootmaking or something else instead. She never sat for him again after that, and would not have if he had begged her to. That was the most curious adventure she had ever had, and although she was getting used to artists she said she didn't want another like it, and I agreed with her it must have been a bit thrilling.

We were getting on splendidly together, and I found her so nice that I had already realised that I was in luck's way that afternoon, when there came another ring at the bell, and who should it be but Jeph. Of course I asked him in, as I felt quite elated with myself, and I remember the look on his face of astonishment when he saw I had a lady visitor, for beyond what he had read in books about life in studios he knew very little really of what went on in them; so we had quite a cheery little tea-party, for he was capital company.

After this he didn't take long getting accustomed to finding visitors of the fair sex when he called, and I feel convinced that his ideas on art henceforth were more specially connected with the pretty girls he might have the chance of meeting at my studio.

But to return to this particular occasion, I could not afford models, so I had to resist the temptation for the moment to paint a picture from my new acquaintance, much as I should have liked to, for she really was very pretty and had, as I have said, fair hair of a shade I have always had a particular *penchant* for.

When at last it was time for her to go I told her quite frankly that I was not able to give her a

sitting yet awhile, and I believe she intuitively guessed my reasons and appreciated my frankness, for we parted the very best of friends, and she promised to come and see me again very soon.

"Never mind," she said, "if you cannot give me any work, you can always let me have a cup of tea, and I should love to have another nice chat with you like we have had this afternoon," and when we separated I felt that there was already a certain bond of sympathy between us.

After this she was constantly calling on her way home from her sittings and making all sorts of excuses for doing so. In the course of time I began to hope that the studio possessed some possible attraction for her beyond the chance of getting a sitting from me, and I soon got to look forward to her coming to see me, and even to wait for it. She seemed to bring an atmosphere of cheerfulness into the place and somehow managed to impart what I had already felt was wanting to complete the *ensemble* of the studio — the feminine element—that mysterious something, without which, as I have always felt since those days, all is grey and monotonous. I fancy I can still hear her familiar tap at the studio door, and her cheery "May I come in? Are you alone?" and can see her unfeigned pleasure at being with me again.

One sunny morning I remember she turned up, wearing such a charming frock that it positively gave me an inspiration, and I decided to risk the expense and start a painting from her there and then.

I had, as I have said, a few feet of ground which was dignified with the name of "garden" at the back of the studio, with rather a quaint little flight of steps leading up to it, and some straggling bushes. It was really not worth mentioning as a garden, but somehow it suggested an open-air subject, and to her evident delight I said she could sit to me for

it if she liked. Whether it was the subject or my model I don't know, but the picture brought me luck, as I sold it before it was finished.

What jolly times they were whilst I was painting it. I can see her now in my mind's eye seated on a rug on the top step leaning against a packing case which represented an old wall. Her colouring was perfect in the open air, and I worked with an enthusiasm which I believe she shared, for she took the greatest interest in the work as it progressed—in fact our relations were scarcely those of artist and model, and she realised it as well as I. We used to have afternoon tea in the "garden," and I remember her facetiously suggesting that it only wanted a few wasps to complete the illusion and make it quite rural.

It was very delightful while it lasted, for it was all new to me; but it was not destined to become a liaison such as one might have expected under similar circumstances in Paris—as a matter of fact it terminated somewhat abruptly, as will be seen.

The picture was at last finished, and then she had to look out for some other sittings; but still she came to see me as usual. From dropping in occasionally she gradually took to calling every day, until at last I could never be certain if I was going to be alone or not. It was not exactly awkward, but as in the meantime my relations were beginning to look me up it was not always convenient to have a girl there when they came, more especially as I was not painting from her.

In Paris it didn't so much matter; studio life was so different, and there were no prejudices to be overcome, moreover I had no female relatives to visit me there. Well, one afternoon I had a little tea-party on when there came a ring at the bell, followed by her tap at the studio door. I went out, palette in hand as was my usual wont, and pulling the door to behind me, explained in a whisper that I had a

family party, so she must forgive me if I didn't invite her in. She looked a little bit surprised and disappointed, as this was the first time such a thing had happened.

"I suppose it cannot be helped," she remarked; "but I wanted so much to have a chat with you. I will come back this evening."

In the evening, however, I was not there as I had to dine *en famille*, so I had to leave a note to that effect pinned on the door. The next day she came as though nothing had happened; she quite understood, she said, that I was obliged to go out sometimes and be with my people. But it was the little rift within the lute, and on two other occasions shortly after I was again obliged to make excuses for not asking her in. At last the end came with tragic suddenness.

I was not expecting her one afternoon—a friend and I had two ladies to tea, and we were having a very jolly time laughing and singing. Any one just outside the studio could have heard our merriment distinctly. Suddenly there was a ring, followed by a tap at the door I knew so well. Somehow I felt annoyed at her visit just at that moment, so asked my friend to go out and say I was engaged and could not see any one. He came back in a few minutes looking very mysterious, and coming up to me said significantly, "It is Jones, and he says he won't keep you a moment, but he must speak to you; you had better go, I think." So I went out. I shall never forget the look on her face; she was positively livid with suppressed rage or jealousy; I never thought it was in her.

"I am sorry to disturb your little party," she said with icy intonation; "but you might give me that book I left in the studio yesterday."

Her manner irritated me beyond measure, and any tender feeling I may have had towards her vanished instantly. I had seen this sort of thing too often

whilst living in Paris, and didn't want to start any of it on my own account here in London—so without a word I went back into my studio, fetched the book, and brought it to her. She took it without saying anything, and was walking down the gravel path to the street, when something impelled me to follow her and ask her when I should see her again—for after all we had been very good pals, and I suppose I had just a little soft spot in my heart for the girl. She turned round, and I noticed to my surprise that her fit of temper had passed, and she was weeping.

"I am never coming to see you again," she replied quietly; "so you will be quite free to have as many girls as you choose in the studio. I have been very foolish to let you see how much I care, but it has been a lesson to me I shan't forget."

I was dumbfounded, as I had had no idea that she had taken our seeing so much of each other so seriously. I could do nothing but utter a sort of mild protest. She turned to go away without another word, whilst I stood at the gate irresolute and half hesitating, watching her retreating form, as she walked quickly up the deserted street. For a moment I had it in my mind to run after her and persuade her to come back; but the thought was only momentary, young as I was then I had already realised from what I had seen in Paris that anything in the nature of a "tie" was irksome, and besides which I knew that I wasn't in love with her, although I liked her very much.

As she disappeared round the corner and out of my life I felt instinctively that it was better for both of us that it should end thus.

"So you have managed to get rid of Jones at last; we thought you were never coming back," cried my visitors.

"Yes," I replied; "I am quite free now." But I could not help feeling a little pang at my heart as I remembered her tears.

CHAPTER III

My letter of introduction to Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A.—His house and studio in Holland Park Road—The artistic beauty of its interior—Impressions of my visit—Leighton's sympathetic personality—His wonderful charm of manner — His linguistic accomplishments — The secret of his great popularity — His Sunday receptions—Amusing anecdote of a Royal Academician —The fashionable crowd in the studio on Show Sunday—Story of the President and the model.

I HAD brought with me from Paris two letters of introduction from Gérôme, my Master, at the École des Beaux Arts, one to Lord Leighton, then Sir Frederick Leighton, the President of the Royal Academy; the other to John Everett Millais, R.A., but had postponed presenting them until I was settled at some permanent address, so that now I was fixed up in Marlboro' Hill I decided to pay my visits.

Millais lived in a great big newly-built house of the prosperous *bourgeois* type at Palace Gate facing Kensington Gardens. He was reputed to be up to his ears in work, and to be making £30,000 a year by his portrait painting alone in those days, so I had my doubts about being able to see him. He happened to be out of town when I called, so I went straight on to Sir Frederick Leighton's, hoping to have better luck with him. Curiously enough, for some reason which I am not able to recall, I never presented my letter of introduction to Millais; it was a long way from St John's Wood to Kensington, and I heard he was a difficult man

to catch, so perhaps that accounted for my not chancing the journey again.

Sir Frederick lived in Holland Park Road, in a very beautiful place, which he had had built from his own designs, and which had become one of the show places of the artistic world. Holland Park Road in those days was almost rural in its quietude, for it was practically an unfinished thoroughfare, in fact so much so that Leighton used to tell every one as a joke that he lived in a mews, for to get into his road from either end one had to pass through a stable yard; but he had artistic company in his "mews," for his friend Val Prinsep lived next door, and there were several studios of eminent painters close by in the road itself—amongst whom was Solomon J. Solomon, the most brilliant of the younger men of the day, who had just made quite a sensation at the Royal Academy with his painting "Cassandra."

Leighton's house, which has been open to the public since, and can now be visited on certain days, is so well known as scarcely to call for any detailed description, and photographs have been published of it scores of times. Out of sheer curiosity to see what alterations had been made since it has been practically turned into a museum and concert hall, I visited the house a short time ago when in the neighbourhood. To my surprise I found little or no change, and that it was practically as I knew it during the lifetime of the Master. I was quite prepared to find it turned into a museum; but it was somewhat painful to me to enter the familiar hall, to see everything as it was when I used to visit Leighton years ago. A picture or two may have been displaced, and the studio rearranged somewhat to adapt it for concert purposes, but apart from this, to any one who knew the President, there was little or no change.

Somehow to me I had rather a few more years

had elapsed before his sanctum, on which he lavished such loving taste, should have been turned into a common show place for a Bank Holiday crowd to wander through at will. If the house had any historic associations one could understand it—but No. 12 Holland Park Road was a new building, the delightful dwelling-place of a very erudite and sympathetic artist, who had a big circle of friends who sincerely admired and appreciated him and mourned his loss, and therefore, to any one like myself, who had the privilege of his personal acquaintance, the endeavour to keep alive his memory by making an exhibition of the house with all his personal treasures so soon after his death, seems almost a sacrilege. It seems on a par with the modern vulgar craze for publishing letters and biographies of dead men almost before the sound of their voices has gone from our ears, a glaring instance of which was shown in the recently published life of that prince of good fellows, King Edward the Seventh. By all means let us preserve anything of interest concerning our great men; but let it be for the benefit of future generations.

In those days of which I am writing, Sir Frederick Leighton was one of the most popular of English painters, and his Sunday receptions were amongst the attractions of the season, and one met every one of note there. I had chosen a week-day for my call, as I had learned that the President only received his personal friends on Sundays.

With a certain amount of trepidation I rang the bell at the extremely unpretentious hall door, for intuitively I felt that a good deal depended on my visit. It was, I remember, a lovely spring morning, one of those days when one feels glad to be alive; and as I waited in the sunshine I felt that it was a happy idea on my part having made up my mind to call on so fine a day when only a curmudgeon could be sour with his fellows. The door was opened

"— THE DELIGHTFUL DWELLING-PLACE OF A VERY ERUDITE AND SYMPATHETIC ARTIST —"

by a man servant of impressive appearance—just the type of servant one would have expected. Leighton was said to be so intimate a friend of Royalty and the entire aristocracy that it seemed as though some of his urbanity had shed itself on his attendant. Although he could not fail to perceive that I was a young man unversed in the etiquette of visiting the President, there was none of the haughty disdain he might perhaps have been permitted to display. I asked if Sir Frederick was at home.

"Sir Frederick," he told me with, as I thought, a certain suggestion of deference in his voice, was "at home, but only receives by appointment, and at certain hours."

On my explaining that I had a letter of introduction he said he would take in my card and the letter, and perhaps the President would fix an appointment for me to call. He returned in a few moments, and showing me into an inner hall, said that if I didn't mind waiting a little while, Sir Frederick would come down and see me.

I will not attempt to describe the famous Moorish chamber in which I found myself, for it is practically unchanged to-day—suffice it briefly to attempt to record my impressions of that first visit. Accustomed though I was to splendour of effect in the studios and houses of the great painters in Paris, I had never seen anything to equal the artistic beauty of this inner hall in Leighton's house. It showed genius in its conception, and the taste of an artist and poet in every nook and corner. There was a sense of the mystery and charm of the East around one, and the silence was unbroken save for the splash of a tiny fountain in a shallow marble pool in the centre of the hall, whilst high above, suspended in the darkness of the dome, a small lamp shed an uncanny glimmer of light on the deep blue of the tiled walls.

I was absorbed in contemplation of the romantic

scene, when I heard footsteps, and turning I found myself face to face with the President.

It was often said that Leighton was far and away the best looking man they had ever had as President of the Royal Academy, and I remembered this as soon as I saw him—as I don't think it would have been possible to find a handsomer specimen of manhood than he presented in the 'eighties, for he was of fine presence, above the average height, about 5 feet 11 inches I should say, and built in proportion —but it was his head chiefly that arrested attention. He was in his fiftieth year, and his long hair and pointed beard, which were just turning grey, gave him a most striking appearance. He had the eye of a dreamer and student. He was the *beau ideal* painter of tender subjects and beautiful women, and the most brilliant President the Royal Academy has ever had.

His reception of me was most unconventional, and put me at once at my ease, for he was attired in an old painting smock, and looked just like any ordinary painter in Montmartre. Holding out his hand to me he said heartily, "I am very pleased to know you, and glad to hear from my old *camarade* Gérôme."

His unaffected simplicity and fascination of manner absolutely magnetised me; he held my hand whilst he spoke as though henceforth he was my greatest friend, and I felt in an instant that he was the most genuine man I had ever met. I forgot to mention that the letter of introduction I brought with me was in accordance with French custom sealed up—from his manner therefore it was presumable that its contents were not uncomplimentary so far as I was concerned.

He invited me to be seated, and we had an informal chat on Paris and my work at the École des Beaux Arts, and he seemed interested to hear about friends of his I knew, who had become great painters, for he himself had studied in Paris. He told me that he went over as often as he could, and what a good

thing it was to keep in touch with one's Alma Mater, and then I recollected I had disturbed him at his work, so I hinted at it and got up to go.

"Yes, it is time I got back to my model, but come and see me again whenever you like," he said with the utmost geniality, as he shook me warmly by the hand. "Sunday afternoons I am always at home; but if it is important you will generally have a chance of catching me in between the lights. I shall be pleased to know how you get on in London."

As I came away from the house, delighted with his reception of me, I realised that Leighton's inimitable charm of manner and sympathetic voice were part and parcel of the genius of the man, and that learned one never so hard this *suaviter in modo* is innate and cannot be acquired, and this was undoubtedly the secret of his popularity with all with whom he came in contact.

It may be of interest to mention as an instance of his unfailing courtesy, that he never, judging from my own experience, left a letter unanswered even for a day. At the time of which I am writing, before the advent of the telephone and the almost universal use of the typewriter, he apparently did all his correspondence himself, the arduous nature of this task may therefore be imagined considering what the magnitude of his correspondence must have been. This remarkable trait in his character always impressed me, and I have often contrasted him in my mind with other men of importance I have met since, who consider the answering of letters as a subject that requires no manner of regard whatever.

From this day I felt that I could look on Leighton as a personal friend, and I had no hesitation in taking advantage of his cordial invitation to call on him. Sunday, as he had told me was his *jour de reception* invariably, and the house and studio were usually full of interesting and distinguished people who wandered around the place as they pleased. All the work on

which he had been engaged during the week would be on view, and he gladly welcomed criticism if intelligently given.

As is well known, Leighton was a most accomplished linguist, and spoke several languages absolutely fluently and with perfect accent — not the least interesting feature therefore of these informal Sunday receptions in the studio was to watch the remarkable facility with which he kept up conversations with foreigners who happened to be visiting him. He never seemed to be taken aback whether it was French, German, Italian and, I believe, Spanish ; it all came quite natural to him apparently, together with the distinctive mannerism of each.

A rather amusing anecdote was told of a brother Royal Academician of Leighton's who determined to emulate his example and also become a linguist, so as a start he took a holiday and went over to Paris and remained there for exactly six weeks— of course he could not learn the language in the time, and he never returned to France; but from then till the day of his death, many years after, he always spoke English with a French accent!

Leighton's "Show Sunday," before his pictures went to the Academy, was one of the events of the season. Holland Park Road would be quite blocked with carriages that afternoon, and the crowd would be so great that one could scarcely move. I often used to wonder how many of all those people he really knew; but every one seemed to shake hands with him, and his urbanity never deserted him, tiring though it must have been to keep it up for several hours.

These glimpses of smart English society were to me quite a novelty, as in Paris my time, when not in the Bohemian artistic world, had been spent mostly amongst *bourgeois* folk who, although for the most part extremely wealthy, were very simple in their tastes, and abhorred anything in the nature of

a "Society Show." Somehow it struck me that too many of the visitors on these Academy Sundays attended for no other reason but that it was the fashion.

As was well known, Leighton had a strong predilection for painting beautiful women, and on one or two occasions when I went to his studio I met his models coming away, and they all appeared lovely creatures to my eyes — though perhaps that was because I guessed they had been sitting to the great man. In this connection I remember a funny story concerning Leighton and one of his models. A girl who used to sit for him for the nude gave up sitting and went on the stage, and got on so well that eventually she married into the aristocracy. One day, sometime after, she called on Leighton — driving up to the house in a smart carriage and pair. Kemp, the man servant, not recognising the quondam model, and probably much impressed by her splendid equipage and gorgeous appearance, ushered her up at once to the studio, where she burst in on the President with scant ceremony. He turned and stared with surprise at the extravagantly attired person who had come in without waiting to be announced. There was a momentary silence, then he bowed and asked with his most courtly air, "To what am I indebted, madam, for the honour of your visit?"

"Oh! nothing," she replied excitedly, "except that I thought I would like to see you again—don't you know me? I used to sit to you for the figure."

"Oh! is that all?—then strip," said the President, without moving a muscle.

CHAPTER IV

St John's Wood in the mid 'eighties—Curious state of things—Art and gallantry — The fastest district of London — Distinguished men living there—The artist colony of St John's Wood as compared with Montmartre—The "Blenheim"—The "Eyre Arms"—Visits to friends' studios—An amusing incident—Unexpected visitors—The trick bell-cord—A determined guest—A plethora of jelly—Models persistency in calling—Families of models—Costume models—Models for the nude—"Showing" their figure—Different ways of undressing of the French and the Italian models—Amusing episode in the studio—The two girls, a shock for the gas inspector —A novel evening bodice.

ST JOHN'S WOOD in the mid 'eighties presented a very curious study; it was without a doubt far and away the most artistic quarter of London. There were artists' colonies in Haverstock Hill, Kensington and Chelsea, but St John's Wood was the artists' district *par excellence*, and many of the most distinguished painters of those days had their studios there. At the same time it was the most favoured place of residence of ladies of easy virtue.

This juxtaposition of art and gallantry is not altogether an unusual coincidence, for it exists in most big cities, where there is an art centre. In Paris it was, and is still, quite remarkable, and in Montmartre, for instance, Phidias is the neighbour of Delilah in almost every street, and lives on very good terms with her in the bargain. But whilst this state of affairs is not altogether surprising across the Channel, where a broader or rather more lax view of such things prevails — it is extremely difficult to

explain how it ever came to be tolerated in sanctimonious old London.

I have often tried to fathom the reasons that prompted a number of thoroughly respectable gentlemen of the palette—with wives and families—to go deliberately and reside in what was undoubtedly then the fastest district of London. The fact of its almost rural seclusion may partially explain it, for the open country was close at hand to St John's Wood in the 'eighties.

In Montmartre the unmarried painters usually lived openly *en ménage* with their *maîtresses* or their *amies,* and made no compliment about it; but such goings-on would have been considered most reprehensible in London, and therefore few of the artists risked it, if they wished to have any pretension to be looked upon as decent members of society — though it was an open secret that all was not exactly monastic in many of the bachelor's studios. But of this more anon.

Meanwhile it may be of interest in order to convey some idea of the artistic character of the district to name a few of the men who lived there in my time. It will be seen that it was a thoroughly representative gathering of some of the best known men of that period.

Frederick Goodall, R.A., was in Avenue Road; close by was Alma Tadema, whose house and studio were badly damaged by the explosion of a barge on the Canal opposite.

In Cavendish Place was one of the most popular painters of the day, Thomas Faed, R.A.

In St John's Wood Road were H. W. B. Davis, R.A., who had Landseer's old house; John Pettie, R.A., Seymour Lucas, R.A., and Phil Morris, A.R.A.

Stacey Marks, the R.A., who achieved fame and fortune by his quaint pictures of storks and pelicans and other grotesque birds at the Zoo, was in Hamilton Terrace, and close by him was Yeend King just

beginning to make his reputation as a landscape painter.

Just round the corner, in Grove End Road, was Phillip Calderon, R.A., and further on in the same road was James Tissot, the French artist, perhaps one of the most talented and original painters at the time; he had a house which was afterwards purchased by Alma Tadema. His garden was said to be the most picturesque and most extensive in the neighbourhood, and there was a small lake in it with water lilies and rushes on it, which he depicted in many of his pictures. Tissot, so rumour went, lived there very much *à la Française*, and as he always painted his mistress, she was usually referred to as "his favourite model," for decorum's sake. The goody folk round about were very scandalised at his household arrangements I remember—they probably looked on the high wall surrounding his place as enclosing a veritable abode of iniquity.

M'Whirter was at the corner of Abbey Road, and in Carlton Hill close by was J. D. Watson, one of the greatest personalities of the Bohemian world at that time. He was a splendid looking man, with a fine figure and handsome aquiline features, reminding one somewhat of a youngish Don Quixote. He was quite a genius in his way; it was one of the things no one could understand, why he was never elected to the Royal Academy. His work was of the School of Pinwell and Fred Walker, and as a painter he was far ahead of the majority of his contemporaries. He gave me the impression of being a disappointed man, yet in spite of his always being a bitter cynic he was very popular amongst the artists in the Wood.

Laslett J. Pott, whose studio was close by, was also quite a character in his way, though not a great painter. He was a major in the volunteers, and looked a good deal more like a soldier than an artist—in fact it was a little weakness of his to be taken for an officer of the Regulars, and certainly his

"— HIS SPLENDID MOUSTACHE AND HIS MARTIAL BEARING."

splendid moustache and his martial bearing gave him quite the appearance of the guardsman of the period.

All along Grove End Road, and in the turnings off it, artists were to be found, and all more or less well known.

In Melina Place was Johnny Parker, the water colour painter, and across the way in Elm Tree Road was Ernest Parton, who had just made a big hit at the Royal Academy and had his picture purchased by the Chantry Fund; and Ethel Wright, one of the prettiest and most talented of the lady artists, not only of the neighbourhood but of London, who lived in a gem of an old-world house with a studio and a garden. She had a chaperon always staying with her as she was far too young to be living alone in St John's Wood—even under the ægis of Art. She used to give delightful little dinner-parties to her artistic friends, amongst whom I had the pleasure of being counted.

In Waverley Place were amongst others Delapoer Downing and Herbert Lyndon, who shared a studio; and Tom Hemy, a clever painter of marine subjects, but who was over-shadowed by the greater reputation of his brother, Napier; Onslow Ford, the sculptor, was at the corner of Acacia Road; whilst a few hundred yards away in Finchley Road were Dendy Sadler and two Royal Academicians, Briton Riviere and Burgess.

There were groups of studios off Queen's Road, Finchley Road, Marlboro' Road, Carlton Hill, and other streets where were younger men, many of whom made names for themselves since. I have, however, enumerated sufficient to give some slight idea of the district in those days. It was a unique little colony of artists, the like of which could not, I think, exist to-day.

Although there was no fortune to be made out of painting, many of the big artists were doing extremely well, and that encouraged the less known

men to persevere in their efforts. Modern art had not yet been ousted by Old Masters, nor illustration by photography.

Looking back on those years it seems to me that every one took life easier, even one's pleasures less boisterously, and one had more time to oneself than nowadays—though perhaps that was because you were young then and with all your life before you. But anyhow there is no doubt the temptation to gad about was not so great, and I soon found that if St John's Wood did not offer the same wild attractions I had got accustomed to in Paris, it had its compensations in the shape of plenty of pretty girls to come and sit for one, and lots of good fellows who were glad if you dropped in to have a smoke and a yarn after work, for I was not long in getting to know several of my *confrères*.

There were one or two places where one was sure to run across brother brushes ; the "Blenheim," which was quite close to my studio in Marlboro' Hill, or the "Eyre Arms," a little way off, of which I shall have plenty to relate further on.

These chance *rencontres* with men who had studios near you gave an additional charm to the artistic life of the neighbourhood, and reminded one not a little of living in a big village where every one soon gets to know every one else. Men would "put on a pipe" of a morning, and stroll round to friends' studios very often for no better reason than that they didn't feel up to work yet, and wanted to while away an hour or so, and unless one was busy oneself, or wanted to be alone, it was very pleasant having some one calling to see you at any odd time. Moreover, it gave opportunities for exchange of ideas which were often very acceptable. One was not old enough in those days to have "axes to grind," and one got franker criticism than one gets as one grows older, when the stress of competition and jealousy begins to develop itself.

"Come round, old chap, for a few minutes and have a smoke, and tell me how my picture is getting on," was what you heard almost every day, and very often one was glad for the excuse of a stroll out, especially if it was a fine, sunny morning, and the studio appeared a bit stuffy in consequence.

Whilst these informal and unexpected visits from one's neighbours were very pleasant, they were apt at times to lead to somewhat awkward predicaments, and this reminds me of a funny incident which is worth telling.

An artist who had a studio not far from me was very fond of the ladies—not an unusual state of affairs, perhaps, especially amongst the knights of the palette, but he was particularly strong on this point, and was seldom without a petticoat near him. One fine, hot summer afternoon a great pal of his went round to see him, and finding the door of the studio ajar, walked in unceremoniously and without knocking first. To his great amusement he discovered his friend on the divan with a lovely girl in diaphanous drapery in his arms. This situation was certainly compromising, and the unbidden visitor was about discreetly to retire so as not to disturb the two inamorata who were in the ecstasies of spooning. He was hoping that his entrance would not be noticed, but in backing out he knocked against something which caused the couple to turn round with guilty haste, and the lady gave a little scream.

The visitor apologised profusely for his intrusion, whereat his friend, seeing who it was, got into a violent rage, and called out to him, "How dare you come in when you see I am engaged!"

So irritating were these unexpected visits at times when one wanted particularly to be alone, that a man I knew had fixed up an ingenious arrangement by which he could ring the street door bell without going outside. There was a sort of wooden pedal at the

side of a paint cabinet, attached to this was a cord connecting with the bell wire; when he wanted to get rid of a bore he would stroll nonchalantly as though to get something from the cabinet, and the rest was easy. There would be a loud ring at the bell, he would go to see who it was, remain away for a few minutes, and on returning would say, "Awfully sorry, old chap, but I have got to go out at once, some one has sent for me," or anything else that came into his mind at the moment. Then putting on his hat he would add, if he saw his visitor had not taken the hint, "I am afraid I shall have to turn you out, as I do not know what time I shall be back."

Unwelcome visitors were, however, not always got rid of in spite of the bell, and he used to tell of an incident that occurred to him on one occasion in particular.

He was expecting his best girl when there was a ring at the bell, and on going to the door he found it was the mother of a damsel who had sat to him in a friendly way for a picture. The family had been very kind to him once when he was ill, and shown him a good deal of hospitality at different times; so, although it was very annoying and awkward the old lady turning up at this particular moment, he had to pretend to be delighted to see her, and asked her in. Meanwhile he glanced surreptitiously at his watch, and discovered he only had about twenty minutes to spare. As the old lady had always accompanied her daughter when she was sitting for him, she knew the studio well. She had a lot of parcels under her arm, and in she walked and flopped down contentedly into the most comfortable armchair, saying cheerfully, to the artist's horror, "Well, it's lucky finding you in, as I am positively dying for a cup of tea. I have been shopping all day and feel knocked up, so I said to myself, if George is in I know he will be a good Samaritan

and let me sit quietly in his studio until it is time to go to the station to catch my train."

"Catch your train," repeated George mechanically. "What time does your train go?"

"Oh, there's one at 5.5 (it was then past 4) and there is not another after that till 7.15."

The artist made up his mind instantly that, bar unforeseen circumstances, she would catch the 5.5—but, of course, he didn't tell her this. So with much alacrity he put the kettle on the stove with as little water in it as possible, so that it would boil quickly, laid the tea things, and altogether was so smart about it that the dear old lady chaffingly suggested he had missed his vocation—he ought to have been a parlour-maid. Well, he hurried her through tea as rapidly as he decently could, and bethought him of the bell trick, and he went out in response to the ring. In a few minutes he returned with an assumed air of much annoyance, preached the usual yarn, and told her how awfully sorry he was that he had to go out at once, and as he was not certain what time he was coming back he thought he had better put her in a cab and she would just catch the 5.5. His feelings may be imagined when she replied that she felt so tired that she had unbuttoned her boots, and she didn't mind a bit him leaving her alone in the studio, and that she would have a sleep and tidy herself up and catch the 7.15—she knew he was a very busy man, so she would forgive him running away and leaving her, etc. Here was a pretty predicament, for what could he do, he could not very well tell her she must go, so he murmured something about not liking to leave her alone there.

"Never you mind about me," she replied, with a merry old lady's laugh. "I can look after myself, and I shall probably make myself another cup of tea before I go—so you run away and don't worry about me." There was no help for it, so out he

had to go, and he strolled up and down outside till his girl, who was never punctual, turned up, and he told her all about what had happened, and they had to walk about the streets till the old lady had gone.

The *dénouement* was too funny for words; when he got back into the studio he found a sweet little note, that the dear old soul had noticed that George wasn't looking quite himself (probably a little worried!), and having luckily the ingredients with her that she was taking back with her into the country, she had spent the time, when alone in the studio, in making him a little invalid jelly —and adding that he must leave it to set till the following day, when she would look in to see if he was better. George was naturally pleased at her kind thought. Imagine his horror when the following morning his charwoman came to him and asked what she should use for his breakfast as all the cups and basins were full of some "yellow muck," which perhaps, she added, he didn't want disturbed. The dear old lady had made enough jelly to supply a military hospital; but the worst of it was, it hadn't set, and showed no signs of doing so. Here was a pretty predicament, as he didn't like to throw it away, as she was coming to see him again that day. As far as I remember, he drank his tea that morning out of the soap-dish.

The most persistent of visitors at all times were the models; all day and at any hour they would be calling. As the studio I had taken was a very well-known one, and had been occupied for several years by figure artists, a day never passed without several rings at the bell from would-be sitters — and generally females. Most of them seemed to live in Camden Town, and they hunted in packs apparently. A very large percentage had little pretension to good looks, and had evidently tried to take to sitting as an easier way of earning

"SHABBY INDIVIDUALS OF UNCERTAIN AGE WHO LOOKED LIKE BROKEN-DOWN ACTORS."

money than going into service. After the novelty had worn off, one got very tired of answering rings at the bell, when one happened to be busy, to find some dowdy, ill-favoured individual outside, and to hear the invariable, "Do you want a model, sir?" It was a mystery to me how the majority managed to make a living at it at all; in Paris they would not have earned a crust. The patience they displayed was often exemplary, for it must have been very disheartening going from studio to studio, and so seldom getting anything out of it all—except a rough answer when the artist was in a temper at being disturbed.

Male models were also calling persistently, though there didn't seem to be so many of them. They were not nearly so picturesque as the ones you saw in Paris, as they were generally down at the heel, shabby individuals of uncertain age, who looked like broken-down actors, and who probably divided their time between "supering" at theatres and sitting for artists. There was an oldish fellow I remember, who used to come round, he wasn't anything to look at, and hadn't got a hair on his head—in fact, he was as bald as a billiard ball, yet he called himself a model; what he used to sit for I could never imagine. There were, however, two or three who were quite characters in their way—one in particular with a very fine head. He was an old seafaring man, and eventually sat for the doctor in Sir Luke Filde's famous picture.

Many artists would fix notices outside their doors, "No models required," and one I knew, who was a bit of a wag, went so far as to put—"No models, hawkers, or dogs admitted—dustmen may call." Still this didn't deter them, for they were a determined lot, and would ring the bell at all hazards.

It was so seldom that any really beautiful women called that one often wondered where the artists found the lovely faces they painted in their

pictures; but it was probably the same as I noticed in Paris — an exceptionally good-looking model never had occasion to go round asking for work, so unless she had an introduction she never called to see you, she got all the sittings she could manage among her own *clientèle*. Apart from those girls, who, as I have suggested, probably took up sitting instead of going into service, there were many who had been brought up as models, and who came from families who had been all models. There were several girls of this description who were quite well known among the artists—they had been posing practically since they were old enough to sit up, and if they were not beautiful, at least they made excellent and reliable models, and could therefore always make a living at it. They were in great request for drapery, or any pose requiring exceptional steady sitting. Most of them sat for the figure, and it was often quite amusing to me at first to note the businesslike method in which they acted. As I was a newcomer, and a possible employer, they would always suggest "showing their figure" when they called, if I happened to ask them in to take their address. It didn't seem to make the slightest difference to them how chilly the studio was.

"That doesn't matter," they would often say; "I'll show it you now while I am here, and then you will know what it is like, and you can make a note of it in your model book," and often before one could stop them they would start undressing. Many would look round for a screen or curtain to disrobe behind, but others treated the process in so business-like a manner that it made no difference to them taking off their clothes in the middle of the studio. They often seemed to wear specially made dresses and underclothes which seemed to come undone as if by magic—a button here, a hook there, and the whole lot was off in an instant.

By permission of R. Soudier

"MOST OF THEM SAT FOR THE FIGURE."

"WITH A SORT OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS."

It used to be said in the Paris studios that you can always distinguish between the French and the Italian models by the way they take off their chemise. The French girl invariably lets hers fall daintily to the ground round her feet, and steps out of it, whereas the Italian, on the contrary, takes it off carelessly over her head. I was reminded of this by the way the English models disrobed—they did it usually with a sort of self-consciousness which seldom had either the grace of the Frenchwoman or the abandon of the Italian.

A peculiar episode comes back to me in this connection; it makes me smile even now when I think of it. One morning two models called, and, as I was alone, and they were not bad-looking girls, I asked them in to take their addresses. Somewhat to my surprise they both offered to show me their figures there and then to "save time," as they put it, so, as I was not expecting anybody, I told them they could undress behind the curtains which masked the alcove which I used as a bedroom. They had just left me when there came a ring at the bell, and I found it was the gas inspector, who had called to see me with reference to a fault in the gas-cooking stove. We stood talking outside for a moment on the matter, and then, without thinking of what I was doing, I asked him to come into the studio. He had just finished looking at the stove, and we were coming out of the inner room, when suddenly a voice called out, "Shall we come in?" For the moment I clean forgot about the two models, and thinking I had left the studio door open I said, "Who's there? Come in!" The curtains of the alcove were parted and in walked two nude girls, and stood like statues in the middle of the studio. The inspector stared in blank amazement at the vision before him, as well he might, for it was as unexpected as it was pleasing, as both the models had lovely figures. He had the presence of

mind, however, to hide his embarrassment, and didn't utter a word; for all the curiosity he displayed he might have been an artist himself, but the look on his face spoke volumes.

After giving one or two different poses the girls asked if that would do, and could they dress again. Of course I told them to do so, and they went back behind the curtains. Whilst they were getting into their clothes the inspector, with a snigger, whispered to me that he "must really take up art as a 'obby!"

One of the best looking of the women who used to come round and ask for sittings had hit on quite a novel idea. I had been told of it, but the first time she called I forgot it, so her dress gave me a curious surprise. She told me she didn't sit for the whole figure, but merely for the bust, which she added was said by artists to be very fine. She would show it me. I told her not to trouble, as I was not in want of a model just at the moment; but she was not to be deterred. She was wearing a long rough ulster and a grey skirt. To slip off the ulster was the work of a moment, when to my surprise she was wearing a black evening bodice cut so low as to completely display her bosoms. She certainly had a magnificent neck and shoulders and figure, so she was perhaps justified in wishing to display it, though the manner was singular to say the least of it, and far more suggestive than the entirely nude form would have been.

But then, what elsewhere might appear unconventional and even indecent, is in studio life, as I shall try to show as I go along, looked upon as of ordinary occurrence.

CHAPTER V

Models as a class—Love in the studio—An awkward *contretemps*—An amusing incident—Earnings of models—The temptation to go wrong—Black sheep—Artists marry models—Jealous wives—Some amusing incidents—Love resuscitated—The "engaged" couple—Amateur models—Chance acquaintances—Some amusing incidents—Risks one ran—An exciting adventure.

LOTS of people, I found, imagined because a girl sat for the "altogether" that she must be a bad lot, and this I was not long in discovering undoubtedly was a very erroneous impression, for as a rule models I came across were a very respectable and hardworking class. Anyhow that was always my experience, especially with those who had been brought up in the profession and been at it practically all their lives. An artist who would have ventured to take liberties with his model ran the risk not only of seeing her put on her clothes and walk out of the studio, but also of her telling every one of his goings-on. Of course I do not wish to infer that there were no tender episodes in the studios, as there were doubtless many models who were in love with artists they sat for, and *vice versâ*; that was only human nature after all. I refer to men who might have had the idea that a girl sitting to him for the figure was "up to anything," and attempted to act accordingly; more often than not he found out his mistake, and had sometimes to make very humble apologies to avoid a scene.

I remember something that an artist friend of mine told me happened to him on one occasion, and

which taught him a lesson he never forgot. A very pretty girl, a model, called on him one day, and she had such a glorious figure that he could not resist the temptation to give her a sitting the following morning. He was not quite decided what he should do from her, so when she was undressed he got her to try various poses, in all of which she looked so splendid that he couldn't make up his mind how to paint her. Whilst suggesting different positions they were chatting in quite a friendly manner, till at last, and he couldn't quite explain why, he said, as he was gazing at the lovely form before him she suddenly became in his mind, what she really was, a very beautiful woman and no longer a model. His admiration for her was responsible for the introduction into the tones of his voice of a trace of tenderness, and under the pretext of altering the pose she was taking, he touched her lightly. She took no notice of this apparently, so he felt instantly emboldened to go a step further, and bending forward he gave her a slight kiss on the neck. She started back as though she had been stung, and exclaimed angrily:

"What do you mean by doing that? How dare you? If you attempt that sort of thing with me I shall put on my things at once and go—so I warn you."

He stood abashed, not knowing at first what to say, then started making excuses for his lapse from decorum, all of which she treated with scornful indignation; however, he managed to appease her after a while, and she forgave him, but she never sat for him again.

The mention of relations between artists and their models reminds me of a story they told of a man who was on the best of terms with a girl who sat for him — it was an open secret, and they always addressed each other even in public in the most endearing terms, such as "sweetheart," "ducky darling," and so forth. One day, however, an important client

called unexpectedly, and was shown in whilst a sitting was in progress. The artist waited till the visitor had got well into the studio, and turned with an air of importance to the girl and said abruptly, "You can rest now, model."

"All right, artist," was her prompt reply.

You paid your model then, the same as you do now, namely, 7s. a day and her lunch, so she didn't do so badly if constantly at work; but this was seldom the case, and probably at the end of the month she would have only earned a starvation amount. All the more credit to her, then, if she kept straight, and a wonder to me always was that so many did. There were, of course, as in every line of life, lots of black sheep amongst them—girls who took to drink and went to the bad, and the wonder was there were not a great many more, considering the "fast" atmosphere of St John's Wood in those days, and the numbers of gay women who lived in every street—the sight of whom must have often given the poor models furiously to think.

Several artists I knew had fallen in love with their models and married them, and in most cases the result was a very happy one; but there were a few very much the reverse, where the wife had developed jealousy of other models to such an extent as to be almost unbearable, even if their husbands were not good-looking and long past the age when they might have had some excuse for mistrust. The curious part of it was that the usual form this jealousy took would be a wild, unreasoning suspicion of anything in petticoats that came to the studio—sometimes even of the very charwoman—with the result that in order to have peace at any price, the unfortunate artist would end by sinking his individuality, and only painting subjects his wife approved of. It was quite pitiful at times to watch a man's spirit gradually being nagged out of him.

There was one lady, the wife of a distinguished

old painter, whose whole life appeared to be taken up with watching her husband, and from all accounts she was never really happy unless she thought she was on the verge of catching him in *flagrante delicto*. She positively revelled in her fancied grievances against him, yet he was as guileless an old man as one could meet anywhere; but now and again his beaten down spirit would revolt against her bullying —a flash in the pan as it were.

On one occasion, for instance, he was working very diligently, when his wife rushed into his studio and accused him of being familiar with his model—and the old man actually had the pluck to retort angrily: "Good God, woman! how can I be spooning with a person sitting twelve feet away from me?" He was usually very meek and cringing, and once, rather than have a row, he sent his model away and never finished his picture.

There was another artist's wife, also an ex-model—who had conceived quite a brilliant idea. She had had a peep-hole—with a sliding flap over it, which worked noiselessly, somewhat similar to those used in prisons—made in the studio door, so that she could look in at any moment and see what her husband was doing, without his being aware of it. Perhaps, however, one of the most curious affairs of this description I ever heard of was about an old married couple who had for years been living a cat and dog existence—always quarrelling, or not being on speaking terms—suddenly changing for some reason, best known to themselves, and actually ending by falling in love with each other again. I should never have believed it if I had not seen them myself, sitting hand in hand, calling one another by endearing terms, and looking as spoony as a pair of young lovers.

I am told that such cases are not altogether rare; but I don't want to come across one again. It struck me, I remember, as being positively nauseating.

Living *en ménage*, such as one saw so much of in

Paris, was very rare amongst the artists I came across in St John's Wood. I knew two people who had lived together for a number of years and shared the same studio; but they gave out they were "engaged," and people pretended to believe them, and so there was no scandal, and as they eventually got married, when on the verge of old age, and were happy ever after, it all ended in most conventional style.

The fact was, what in London commenced as a flirtation generally ended at that outwardly; whereas in Paris there was no halfway house—it was all or nothing, and no secrecy about it whatever. If a man in Bohemia preferred to live with his *maîtresse* to getting married, no one thought any the worse of him. There may be a lot of hypocrisy about the English view of these matters; but it seems to be better it should be so, than proclaiming one's peccadilloes from the house-tops.

What spoilt "modelling," if one may so term it, as a profession was the number of amateur models. There is undoubtedly a great fascination about a studio for the average female, who probably associates it with endless romance and mystery, and pictures to herself all young artists as out-and-out Bohemians and devil-me-care fellows, and is therefore easily persuaded to sit if "asked nicely."

In St John's Wood, when I was living there, one had no difficulty in finding any number of pretty girls who lived at home, and had nothing much to do during the day, who gladly welcomed the chance of a break in the usual routine of their everyday life by going for an hour or so to a studio.

My experiences in this respect were doubtless but similar to those of many other artists who took the trouble to keep their eyes open when strolling about the neighbourhood. In this relation I found that one had more chance than in Paris — where if one got to know a girl without a formal introduction the

odds were she was a *femme entretenue*, or some one who would speak to any one who spoke to her, and with whom it was only a question of L.S.D.

In the Wood these chance acquaintances often turned out to be quite respectable girls, with whom one became great pals, and who looked upon it as quite an adventure to sit for a picture. I may have been particularly fortunate, but certainly some of the best friends I had in those days I got to know through the introduction of ladies whom I met casually in an omnibus or train, and who came and sat for me. Several of my most successful pictures were painted from "friends," whose acquaintance I had made in this unorthodox manner.

As a matter of fact, when one has a picture in one's mind, and one wants some particular type of face for which one might wait for ever, and not find a professional model to suit it, the temptation is often irresistible to try and get to know the girl you come across who is just the model you have been looking for.

"You have just the face I want for a picture I am going to paint," may sound to the layman a very thin excuse for an introduction, but it is generally founded on fact. It was well known that Bastien Lepage made the acquaintance of the most distinguished living actress in this way, and his name was made through the picture he painted from her.

Mrs Grundy may turn up her eyes at such unconventionality; but it exists nevertheless, and always will exist, however much she may condemn it.

But to return to the subject of amateur models. My experience has generally led me to the conclusion that if a "friend" takes sufficient interest in you or the picture, as the case might be, she will generally do her best to help you make it a success — whereas the average model looks upon the artist as merely her employer, and there her

"JUST THE MODEL YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR."
From the original drawing in the Collection of M. E. de Rossi.

"THE CHILD WAS JUST WHAT THE ARTIST WANTED FOR HIS PICTURE."

concern ends. There may, of course, be models who are not quite as indifferent, but I imagine they are few and far between; their one anxiety is to get the sitting over and be off. Of course it is not every amateur model, however good-natured and willing, can keep a pose for any length of time, especially if it is at all difficult, so in that case one is bound to engage a professional.

I have had many funny experiences of the difficulties that crop up when painting from amateur models — and doubtless many artists could also relate curious adventures on this subject. A friend of mine told me of one which was very amusing. He wanted a particular type of little girl, and after searching for some time in vain he mentioned it to his charwoman, and she got a "lady friend" of hers to let her youngster come and sit to him for the usual fee he paid. The child was just what the artist wanted for his picture, and came to him one Saturday for a sitting—but he soon found to attempt to paint anything from her was useless; she couldn't keep still for a moment, and chatted away the whole time, till she nearly drove him crazy. After several unsuccessful endeavours he gave it up as a bad job, and paying for the sitting he told her to go home, and he should not require her services again. To his surprise the child turned up on the Monday morning.

"I thought I said you were not to come any more," he exclaimed angrily on seeing her enter the studio.

"Yes," was the reply; "and you better not do it again. I told my mother about it, and she *was* wild!"

I remember one of my own experiences with a would-be model. A pretty girl came to me one day just as I was going out, and said a friend of hers had given her my address, and told her she could probably earn some money by sitting for me.

She was so nice that I asked her to call on me the next day, and I would make a sketch from her. This she did, and in the course of conversation I gathered that she was not absolutely a prude, and might perhaps be induced to sit for the figure; so I suggested that if she would I would paint her as a nymph, or something equally appropriate.

To my surprise she said, "No, I won't sit to you for the figure." Laying such emphasis on the "you" I naturally asked why she objected so particularly to me—as I had not said a word to her that could by any chance be construed wrongly. "Oh, nothing," she replied ambiguously; "except that I have heard you lived in Paris."

I didn't pursue the subject, but often wondered what on earth she meant.

There was a girl who used to come and sit for me sometimes; she was quite respectable in so much as she lived with her people, who were fairly well to do. She sat for me purely for the fun of the thing she said, and would not let me pay anything for it, although I had suggested treating it as a matter of business. After a little persuasion I got her to sit for the "altogether," as she had a beautiful figure; but she had a peculiar perception of modesty; she didn't mind my sketching her legs and feet bare when she had all her clothes on, but nothing would induce her to take her shoes and stockings off when she was otherwise quite naked. I never could make out why, but I suppose she thought she wasn't entirely nude so long as she kept them on.

One ran a certain amount of risk in asking girls one knew nothing about to sit for you, as I realised on one occasion when an incident of unpleasant nature occurred in consequence.

I met a very pretty woman one evening whilst strolling near the studio, and when she found out I was an artist she offered of her own accord to come and sit for me if I would paint her. As I was about

By permission of L. Soudier

"— BUT NOTHING WOULD INDUCE HER TO TAKE HER SHOES AND STOCKINGS OFF."

From the original drawing in the Collection of M. E. de Rossi.

"I COMMENCED A SKETCH OF HER IN DISHABILLE."
From the original drawing in the Collection of M. E. de Rossi.

to suggest this myself I was delighted when it came from her.

The following day she came up, and I commenced a sketch of her in *deshabille* as she had no prejudices on the subject, and we soon became rather more than friends. I may mention she had on her first visit given me an address at Hampstead where I might write her, as she could not receive letters at her home.

Well, one day she turned up at the appointed time, and we were getting on with the painting when there came a violent ring at the bell—one of those hard, unsympathetic rings that betoken no friendly feeling. My model, as I will call her, to my astonishment jumped up with a whispered exclamation of alarm.

"Who can it be?" she queried.

"Most likely only a bill," said I nonchalantly; but I smelt a rat, all the same—"I will see"—and going over to a sort of peep-hole I had contrived in the door in order to see who my visitors were, I looked out and saw a stranger, a big, heavy man, waiting by the bell.

"Let me see who it is," said my friend, who had suddenly become strangely excited, and, pushing me aside, she peeped through. "It's my husband. I thought it would be. My God! what shall I do?" she gasped out.

"Your husband!" I exclaimed; "you never told me you were married."

"Well, I am, and if he catches me here with you he'll kill me. Where can I go? What shall I do? Think of something quick, there's no time to lose," she continued hysterically as the bell rang out again stridently, and she began putting on her clothes in feverish haste.

Here was a pretty predicament for, as may be imagined, I didn't want a scandal in the studio. Suddenly I remembered the back exit through the garden. Hastily I told her of it, and explained I would ask her husband into the studio; that she

would have to make her escape as noiselessly as possible at the moment she heard him enter. Of course she agreed to do this. So pushing her hat and cloak into her hand, and without a word of good-bye, I let her out and bolted the door, and then hid the picture I was painting from her.

The bell rang out again, and I heard footsteps coming up the pathway, and there was a loud knock as though with a stick at the studio door. An idea occurred to me to explain my delay in opening. Pulling off my coat and waistcoat I went into the lavatory, and wetting my face and hands and roughing my hair I called out, "All right, whoever it is, I won't be a minute," and then after a pause I went to open the door, towel in hand, as though I had been disturbed whilst having a wash. "Oh, I thought it was a lady friend of mine," I said, as though surprised at seeing a stranger, adding, "And what can I do for you, sir?"

"I want to know what you are doing with my wife in your studio," he yelled out.

"Your wife!" I repeated. "Are you mad? I haven't got your wife in my studio."

"Oh, haven't you? Well, I know better, and I have had her followed, so let me in," and before I could stop him—he was, as I said, a big, heavy man—he pushed me aside and rushed into the studio like a raving maniac. By Jove it was lucky he didn't find her there, for I really believe there would have been murder done.

A glance round was sufficient to prove to him there was no lady in the place, as the curtains across the alcove were drawn back and the inner door wide open. He stood still, looking round in amazement.

I heard a faint sound as of footsteps hurrying down the pathway towards the street. I had to give her time to get away, so pretended to work myself up into a violent rage.

"Are you mad or drunk, coming here like this?

Who are you and what do you mean by it? What's the game?"

"So she's not here," he said half to himself; then turning to me, "There must be some mistake. I hope, sir, you will accept my apologies for intruding on you like this, but I was informed that my wife had been seen coming to your studio, and I determined to catch her—and you too," he added with a grim laugh. "However, I am very glad indeed it is not true. I hope you will accept my sincere apologies, and I am very sorry if I have caused you any annoyance."

I could see that he was overjoyed at not finding her in the place, so I pretended to be mollified, and told him I quite understood his feelings in the matter. He turned to make his way out—at the door he offered me his hand, and with a tremble in his voice he said, "We've only been married a couple of years, and I love her more than anything in the world, and the mere thought of any one fooling about with her drives me positively mad, and I could kill her." Then after a pause he added, "You understand, I am sure."

He seemed a jolly, good, honest fellow, the very chap to deserve a good wife; but he had had no luck in the lottery, and I felt very sorry for him.

She never came to see me again, but curiously enough about a year later, when I had almost forgotten the incident, I had a letter from her; it had a black border to it. In it she told me I would "be sorry to hear" she was a widow, that her husband had died suddenly, and that she was going to live with a sister in Canada.

CHAPTER VI

My good luck in Marlboro' Hill — Commissions—Portraits — A beautiful sitter—Trying work—I fall in love—Symptoms of the disease—Keeping the postman busy—Top-hatted respectability—Bohemianism *versus* conventionality—"A talk with papa"—Ignominious retreat—I go to Gorleston—Painting *en plein* air—Tender recollections—I go to Paris to paint portrait—*La vie du Grand Monde*—Leaving Marlboro' Hill—Search for another studio—10 Blenheim Place—The "Eyre Arms" and its *habitués*—The Belsize Boxing Club—The dances in the Assembly Rooms—The coffee-room—The dignified waiter—The private bar—Pony Moore—Amusing episode—Practical joking in the wood—I spend a week-end in a haunted house—The family ghost—Thrilling incident.

THE year I spent in the studio in Marlboro' Hill was pleasant enough from start to finish, and I never had reason to regret having risked taking it. I had nothing but good fortune, and although I didn't make enough money to be able to save anything, I had no occasion to draw on my slender capital the whole time, which meant that I managed to make a living, such as it was, out of my work; no mean achievement considering I was only just starting professionally. Luck of course had a deal to do with it, like it always has, and in my case it took the form of several commissions for small paintings of *genre* subjects for a London dealer, and three or four portraits. One of the latter was particularly interesting, not only because it was of a very beautiful woman, but by reason of the quite unusual circumstances attending it. I feel bound to recount them, as they had a distinct bearing on my life for some time afterwards.

My sitter was the wife of a rich Englishman, who lived in England during the summer, and in Paris and the South of France during the rest of the year. It was late in the season when I commenced the work, so there wasn't too much time to get on with it before they left town, so it was arranged I should go over and finish it in Paris if necessary, as they particularly desired that it should be exhibited at the *Salon.* It would have been difficult to imagine a pleasanter commission, and I started on it with an enthusiasm which was augmented by the impression the beauty of my sitter had made on me.

The next few weeks, therefore, I was at her beck and call, so to speak, and I soon discovered how trying it must be to one's patience to be a society portrait painter, for I can still recall those weary waits in the studio, and the telegrams putting off sitting at the last moment, and all the little worries incidental to painting the portrait of a fashionable beauty. They seemed so important at the time, but when I look back on them after all these years, I realise what a lot of concern one attaches to what really only amount to trifles after all is said and done. With all the best will possible, and my sitter turned out to be as charming as she was beautiful, it was utterly impossible to finish the picture before she left town, so I gladly agreed to go over and spend a month in Paris in the autumn and work on it there. As may be imagined, I was not sorry for the excuse, and the more especially as a friend had offered to lend me his studio to work in.

In the meantime I had plenty to occupy my time in London outside painting, as I had an adventure that landed me as near matrimony as I have ever ventured—it was only my want of pluck that saved me. It came about in this wise.

I was something of a dancing man then, and on one occasion I met at a ball what I thought was absolutely the loveliest creature I had ever cast eyes on, and I

told her I was an artist and would love to paint her, and she said she'd love to sit to me—and I went home and lay awake and thought of her and fell asleep and dreamed of her. The next day I discovered I was madly in love, so, as the symptoms brooked no delay, I sought some one who knew her people, and in a short time I had got not only an introduction, but was invited to a dance at their house.

From that moment I was *non composs* and passed most of my time when I could not see her in writing her lengthy letters, which she promptly answered; so between us we kept the postman busy, for on one day alone I remember, no less than eight communications reached us respectively.

I believe it is admitted that a first attack of love-sickness, like influenza, is always severer than subsequent attacks, so no doubt this was my case, for I can well recollect the dreadful time of alternating suspense and elation I passed through during that period of the disease immediately following on the incubation stage, and I had every reason to believe the object of my adoration was similarly afflicted.

One particularly uncomfortable result of the state of mind in which I found myself was that any original assurance with which Nature had endowed me wholly deserted me at that time, and I believe I found myself realising that if that was one of the consequences of falling seriously in love, it were better to be without it. Perhaps it was because hitherto my experience in this respect had been of but a light-hearted, transient nature—a Bohemian state of affairs which had been, as it were, a result of feeling lonely, and therefore with no deep motive to sustain it. This time I knew somehow it was quite a different matter, and I hardly recognised myself in my new *rôle* of top-hatted respectability—paying afternoon calls, going to social functions, dinner parties, and what not, for the sake of meeting my divinity.

It was indeed a new experience for me, and, with the recollection of my boisterous days in Paris still fresh in my memory, a somewhat startling and unexpected one. It was to be a struggle in my mind between Bohemianism and conventionality, and for the moment I felt like a swimmer on a high diving board, who cannot make up his mind for the plunge because he fears the water is cold.

In the meantime I was getting more and more enraptured, and at length we both decided that I ought to have a "talk with papa."

I had been in my heart hoping to be able to defer the interview, for we had been having such lovely times together that the step I was about to take would, I felt, put an end to all the delightful secrecy of the romance and settle it once and for all on a matter-of-fact basis, which somehow didn't seem to have entered into my ideas up till then, nor did it appeal to me. Still there was no help for it; that relentless task-mistress, Mrs Grundy, had to be reckoned with, and even my love's bosom friend, a jolly girl who had good-naturedly acted as chaperon and played gooseberry for us since the commencement of our rhapsody, had laughingly though significantly thrown out the suggestion that "something ought to be done." I felt she was right, and that I ought not to have required the hint, so after a sleepless night I got up one morning feeling very much as I imagine a man would when going to his execution, and made up my mind suddenly to go and face the music.

Imagine my sensations when the dreaded moment arrived for bearding the stern parent, a hard-hearted merchant of much worldly goods and possessions, whose sympathies I felt only too well would not be entirely in favour of a struggling artist as the husband of his only child; still one could not tell without asking, and it was this I was about to risk.

Although I kept saying to myself "faint heart

never won fair lady" (by the way, she was dark), when the time came, and I was alone with him in his study, in spite of his being quite a small man, and not in the least an individual of terrifying appearance, I found I had no heart left at all, and the interview (the only one of its kind in my adventurous career) ended in my ignominious retreat without a shot fired on either side; and to the day of his death the old gentleman could never have known to what he owed the honour of my visit on that beautiful spring morning. What my lady-love thought of it all I hardly care to reflect upon. Perhaps, as she is now a grandmother, time has softened the blow.

I returned to my work a somewhat chastened youth, although somehow I had the satisfactory conviction that I had just escaped making an arrant fool of myself. I didn't want to look like running away when it occurred to me the best thing to do was to get out of London for a time. I decided, therefore, to carry out a pet idea, and paint something large for the *Salon*—so got an artist friend to accompany me, and we went down to Gorleston, then a tiny little fishing village close to Yarmouth, and here in quiet seclusion I started a six-foot canvas, and we both of us painted and sketched for several weeks. I worked from my models out on the old pier with the very background and composition I wanted, a delightful experience, and one that doesn't always present itself.

We put up at a dear old Dickens-sort of inn called the "Anchor," if I remember rightly, which was on the pier itself and within a stone's-throw of the sea, and it was all so quiet and primitive that one might have been in Holland. I have never been to Gorleston since, but I learn it is now quite an important town, and I should not recognise it.

The village then only consisted of a few fishermen's cottages, and if we wanted any mild excitement we would go into Yarmouth at night. But I had not

"I WORKED FROM MY MODELS OUT ON THE OLD PIER WITH THE VERY BACKGROUND AND COMPOSITION I WANTED."

got over my love affair yet; it had made too deep an impression to be easily effaced, and I generally preferred to wander about at night by myself and think over again and again what might have been.

It is curious how at times one positively enjoys feeling miserable and unhappy all by oneself, nursing one's grief as it were. Several times I recollect I was on the point of making up my mind to return to town and see her again—if she would see me; but, fortunately, and especially for her as I feel bound to admit, better sense I am now convinced prevailed, and I managed to stick to my painting, and thus divert my thoughts; and so time, the great healer, went by, and gradually I recovered, and when we got back to town in the late autumn I brought a large completely finished picture with me, and I found myself quite looking forward to my forthcoming visit to Paris to continue the portrait.

It is almost unnecessary to mention how delighted I was at the prospect of seeing all my French friends again and revisiting my old haunts. It seemed but a few months since I had left, but so much had happened in the meantime. Little had I thought I should be back again in so short a time with my expenses all paid and a commission for a portrait as well. I had good reason to be satisfied, and things could not have looked rosier.

My client lived in the Avenue d'Jena in a beautiful house, but he had suggested I would be freer if I lived out, so I decided to put up at a *maison meublée* I had been recommended opposite the Embassy in the Faubourg St Honore, which was not far away, as I naturally had to be near my client since I was his guest. My friend was as good as his word and lent me his studio, so I was once more installed in Paris.

I spent a delightful month over there. My sitter gave me as much of her time as she could spare from her social engagements, and when she didn't feel

equal to coming to the studio and preferred going into the Bois, I would accompany her either on horseback or in her victoria, which was one of the best appointed in Paris. Her husband drove a very smartly turned out tandem, and a whole party of friends used to meet of a day for tea at the restaurant at the Cascade, which was then the *rendezvous* of the fashionable set.

It was quite a different aspect of the life of Paris to what I have been accustomed to when living there as a student, and I enjoyed it immensely. The *vie de Bohème* has its charms, but so also has the *vie du grand monde*, and it certainly is easier to get used to luxuries that wealth alone can provide than to roughing it as I had been accustomed to. In spite, however, of so much diversion I managed to get on with my work, and it would have been quite completed within the time limit I had given myself had it not been that my sitter was suddenly taken ill and had to leave at a few hours' notice for the South. It was disappointing, but there was no help for it, so I had to pack up and return to London; before my departure, however, she exacted a promise from me that I would accept an invitation from them to go down to Mentone later on and finish the portrait there. The idea of doing so much travelling and having so good a time for the sake of a portrait was not distasteful to me, as may be imagined, so I readily promised to do what she asked.

My tenancy of the studio in Marlboro' Hill had now nearly expired, so I had to set about looking for another place. To find another furnished studio was almost impossible, so I decided, on the strength of my luck, to take an unfurnished one and gradually fit it up. Within a few hours of commencing my search I hit upon a little place that suited my ideas and means admirably. It was at No. 10 Blenheim Place, and consisted of a nice studio — small bedroom, kitchen and an entrance yard (or yard of entrance,

for there was little more) which would be useful for open air painting in. It was newly built and had not yet been occupied, and this probably explained its cheapness.

When the time came for leaving the studio I had passed so pleasant a year in, I really felt quite regretful, and more especially, perhaps, because I was practically starting a new venture, and was moving into premises which I should have to furnish entirely myself. I well recollect my feelings after having moved in when I surveyed my scanty belongings. I had become so accustomed to the comparative luxury of Marlboro' Hill, that it became a positive shock to realise what a lot I had to buy to make the place look even habitable. Although I had been doing so well during the year that was past, it almost seemed like having to commence all over again.

All I had got was an old easel that had belonged to my mother (who was a clever amateur artist), my painting materials, canvases, etc., a couple of wooden boxes containing books and so forth and my personal belongings. It was a very scanty lot indeed, and appeared a very hopeless beginning to setting up *dans ses meubles*, as they say in France. Of course had I had plenty of money to lay out it would not have taken very long to fit the place up, but I had to be careful, so there was naught for it but to pick up gradually here and there absolute necessities, trusting to luck to be able to buy luxuries later on. Fortunately, the place lent itself to easy arrangement, as there were plenty of commodious nooks and corners. I had a good deal of work in hand for my dealer client, so my time promised to be fully occupied.

I found my new quarters very conveniently situated, as they were close to the High Street, which was the only shopping quarter of the neighbourhood, and opposite the "Eyre Arms," which was the only place round about where one could get a decent

meal at night. It may be of interest to mention that all that now remains of Blenheim Place has since been absorbed into Grove End Road. No. 10 was exactly opposite Waverley Place.

The "Eyre Arms" and Assembly Rooms, though only a sort of glorified public house, merits more than passing notice at this juncture. Of course it is very different now to what it was in the days of which I am writing; it was then to all intents and purposes the village inn and the centre of the life of the district, in fact, it was a sort of club where one met the same men every day, either in the billiard room, where a mild game of pool was played every evening, in the coffee room at dinner, or in the modestly appointed private bar, for saloon bars were unknown then.

In the large Assembly Rooms dances were frequently given, for in those days, before the Portman Rooms and the big hotel ballrooms came into existence, there was no large dancing-hall in London except at "Freemasons' Tavern," which did an enormous business in consequence. Up at the "Eyre Arms" nearly all the big drapery establishments gave their annual dances, but the principal event of the year was the Ash Wednesday theatrical ball. Theatres were then closed on that day, so every one on the stage would be there, and all the prettiest women in town. It was always a wonderful sight and most difficult to get tickets for.

The Belsize Boxing Club held their meetings on the first floor also, at the back. This was quite one of the best known of the boxing clubs, and had a lot of good men in it. Bettinson (Peggy), the lightweight amateur champion, was the leading spirit, and Dewhurst was the Secretary. Amongst its members whose names I particularly recall were D'Arcy Bacon (Streakey), Charlie Reeson (who was the single stick amateur champion), Ganger Wills, Jack Hare, King-Trotman, and last but not least, Rufus Isaacs

(the present Lord Chief Justice), who was a very excellent boxer and certainly one of the best men in the Club. On the Club big nights there was always a large gathering of sportsmen from all parts of London. Eugene Corri usually acted as judge in the competitions, and it would have been difficult then as it is now to find a more respected or popular referee.

It was a very mixed crowd one met at the "Eyre Arms," for it was but a sort of glorified inn, as I have said, but there was always a good sprinkling of artists, and often in the coffee-room after dinner there would be impromptu gatherings and discussions on painting or art generally which recalled dimly to my mind the students' meeting places in the Latin Quarter, though of course it was a much older crowd, and whisky and soda was more frequently asked for than coffee, although I remember some of us did try to introduce *mazagrans, i.e.*, black coffee served in tumblers, but with no success, as coffee was not a strong feature at the "Eyre Arms."

We were a cheery lot of young fellows who frequented the place, generally ready for any sort of fun, and one gradually got to know all the *habitués*, who were mostly residents in the immediate neighbourhood.

The coffee-room was one of the most interesting of its kind I have come across in London; one might have fancied oneself in some old country inn. It was fitted up with dark mahogany and horsehair, which still further conveyed this impression.

William, the waiter, was quite a character in himself, and gave additional "tone" to the room. He was quite the best man of his class I ever came across, and was far too good for the humble position of coffee-room waiter; he ought to have been butler or major-domo in a ducal mansion. I always fancied there was some mystery in his being at the "Eyre Arms" at all, for he had all the courteous respect

of the high-class retainer. One's appetite had to be very jaded indeed for one to be able to resist his eloquent and almost pictorial description of the bill of fare, although it never once varied in the evening all the years I went there. Chops or steaks; pressed beef, ham, salad, cold tart and Chedder cheese, simple English provender, verily, but when enunciated by William it seemed to appeal to one so irresistibly that the difficulty only lay in your choice, though you were generally helped in this by William himself.

"I advise you to have a steak, sir," he would perhaps remark. "They're excellent business to-day. What shall I say—a good point and some fried potatoes, sir?"

There was nothing more to be said. Even if you had come in with the idea of regaling yourself on cold meat and salad, you felt somehow that William knew better than you did what was best for your constitution.

If it was a wet evening there was generally quite a little crowd in the private bar, and often some good joke on. I remember on one occasion, when Pony Moore (of Moore and Burgess fame) was in there. Several fellows were gassing about athletic feats they could accomplish. Suddenly Pony chipped in with "I like to hear you young chaps talking about what you can do. I'm an old 'un, but I'll bet any one of you a quid that I can do something not one of you can do."

"Oh, and what's that?" said some one, who evidently fancied himself, and saw a chance of picking up a sovereign easily.

"Take my big toe between my teeth. Do that if you can, you're a bit of an athlete."

We all crowded round amused at the novelty of the bet.

"Done with you," said the young fellow, and seating himself on a chair, he took off his boot, and

then, raising his leg and stooping forward, he attempted to bend his foot back towards his head. It looks a very simple operation, as it is one that babies accomplish without effort, but in a grown-up person, unless a professional contortionist, it becomes an extremely difficult matter after a certain point, as the movement attempted is diametrically opposed to the laws of anatomy. Try as he could the fellow could not manage it, although with much straining he got within a couple of inches of the goal, which was his wide open mouth. Meanwhile every one was egging him on and encouraging him to exert himself to his utmost. At last he had to acknowledge that he could not do it.

"Now let's see you," he said, as he put on his boot again, turning to Pony.

"All right, you shall, but it's a shame to take your money," replied the old man, cocking up his leg and removing his boot.

Then to the intense astonishment and amusement of us all he put his fingers in his mouth and calmly took out an entire set of false teeth, and bending forward he clasped his big toe with them. There were roars of laughter, for nothing could have been simpler, and the funny part of it was that no one had thought it was a "catch."

He was an amusing old chap at times was Pony, and when he was in the mood would tell us interesting reminiscences of his early days as a showman in America. He lived in a large house in Finchley Road, surrounded by a fine garden, in which on the 4th July he always gave a grand display of fireworks, much to the amusement of the neighbourhood.

Whether it was the atmosphere of St John's Wood, or the fact that most of us were comparatively young men in those days, I cannot explain, but there is no doubt we were all inclined to be more or less light-hearted. Looking back, one fancies that life was less strenuous than it is now. Perhaps it wasn't,

but judging from the lively times one had, one did not worry so much as nowadays. I have recollections even of practical joking which could scarcely be practised now; it would probably be considered bad form. Here, for instance, is a specimen of an amusing prank played on me.

There were, as I have explained, two entrances to my place at No. 10—first a door in the wall flush with the street; this led to a small yard, and across this was the studio door. One beastly wet night I had been dining out, and was hurrying home very late and without an umbrella. I had my latch-key in my hand in readiness. Imagine my astonishment when I found that some *farceurs* had conceived the brilliant idea of glueing or pasting up my door with auctioneers' sale bills! It looked as though I was going to be sold up "by order of the trustees." Every inch of the woodwork was so thickly covered that it was hopeless to attempt getting the paper off that night, as it meant an hour's work at least. The difficulty was to locate the keyhole, and evidently this had been the idea of the jokers. A friendly policeman coming along gave me a hand, and between us, after considerable trouble, we managed to discover it. It took the whole of the next morning to get the paper off the door, so effectually had it been put on.

It is surprising the amount of trouble practical jokers will often put themselves to for the successful accomplishment of their purpose. I remember on another occasion I had been in bed some time, and it must have been about half-past one in the morning, when I was awakened by an uncanny noise outside the door. I must explain that my bedroom communicated with a corridor which led to the studio, which, by the way, was quite isolated from the adjoining houses.

I am not naturally a nervous man, but I must confess it is startling to say the least of it to be awakened suddenly in the dead of night by weird

sounds. There was no electric light to switch on in those days, so I groped for the matches and lit the gas by my bed, and then remained quite still and waited and listened.

The noise which had recommenced sounded like ghostly footsteps coming along the corridor, and stopped just outside the bedroom door. I was not sorry I had locked the door, as is my usual wont. It gave me time to think of what was best to be done, for unless I could help it I didn't want to rouse the neighbourhood by opening the window and calling police. The sounds proceeded intermittently. "It must be some one trying to break in," I thought, so, picking up a thick heavy stick, I opened the door cautiously and then peeped quietly out.

The corridor was deserted, and the studio door closed as usual. There was no sign of a nocturnal visitor. Suddenly I heard the mysterious sound again, this time so close by that it gave me quite a turn; I looked up in the direction from which it came from, it was apparently above my head. In an instant I saw it was a joke being played on me; hung over the bell wire was a clothes brush I had missed for some days; attached to it was a thin string which was carried along the wire and over the top of the street door, and so outside, where the jokers were evidently stationed pulling it, doubtless enjoying the idea of the fright they were giving me.

How they had managed to fix it up without my knowing was a mystery, for it was quite cleverly arranged. I was not long making up my mind what to do, and determined to be equal with them. Fetching a large pail of cold water I opened the street door as quietly as possible and peered outside. The string went over the low wall dividing my little yard from the adjoining garden, and was being vigorously pulled. I could hear suppressed laughter and whispering, the conspirators were just the other side. I did not hesitate, and without the slightest

warning I threw the contents of the pail over the wall. They must have been drenched, for the yell they gave could have been heard in Wellington Road. I gave the string a sharp pull and it came away in my hand, and I went back to bed again.

Curiously enough, the recollection of this practical joke stood me in good stead shortly after. I was invited to a week-end shooting party at a big country house some distance from London, and had looked forward with much delight to going, as the place is considered one of the finest specimens of the old Tudor mansions in England, and has several ghosts, as every well-ordered place of its class should have.

I well remember how impressed I was by the first view one obtained of the hall, as we drove up to it through the park. It was a moonlight night in late autumn, and the stately pile, which reminded one curiously of Hampton Court Palace, stood out in weird relief against the sky. It looked like a haunted castle from the outside, but the gloomy interior conveyed a still further impression of the supernatural. One entered by a vestibule which led into a vast white marble hall, in which were statues and busts of past noble owners of the place; a gallery ran round this hall, out of which many dark panelled doors led, and it was but faintly illumined by candles placed here and there.

It would have been impossible to imagine anything more ghost-like. Even the white-haired old butler seemed quite in keeping with his surroundings. I was received by my host in the library, where a huge fire helped to liven up the otherwise gloomy apartment, and I was introduced to my fellow guests. We were a small bachelor party, only six in all, but it was a cheery crew, and one felt at home at once. Shortly after we were told where our respective rooms were, and separated to dress for dinner. I went upstairs to my room, piloted by a young officer, who had stayed in the house before.

The broad staircase leading to the upper part of the building was magnificent, and appeared still more so in the flickering candle-light, which cast curious effects on the family portraits lining the walls. We passed a gloomy corridor on one of the landings.

"Of course you've heard the place is haunted," whispered my companion. "Well, this is where one of the ghosts is usually seen, they say."

"It's just the sort of place one would expect such things," I replied, peering into the shadows; and I felt as though a draught of air suddenly went down my back.

"That's why," he continued, "it's so difficult to get servants to stop here; they hear all the talk about it in the village and get jumpy. There's a young footman in the County Asylum now who went raving mad at what he saw, or thought he saw, on this very spot one night a little while ago. Cheery sort of place, isn't it?" he remarked with a laugh as we went on—and I agreed with him.

My bedroom was quite in keeping with the house, and although there was a bright fire in the hearth the four-post bedstead and old furniture looked very gaunt and sepulchral, and the walls were covered with gloomy portraits. It was a very big room, and had four doors in it. My friend came in when I was dressed to lead the way downstairs to the library again, in case I missed my way.

Dinner was quite a lively affair considering the smallness of the party as compared with the size of the room. Our host had an excellent *chef*, and the wine was perfect. Afterwards we adjourned to the smoking-room and settled ourselves down to our coffee and cigars, and I found myself chatting with my host. He was anxious to hear my first impressions as an artist of the house, of which he seemed very proud, as well he might have been, so he suggested later to have the place lighted up and

to show us all round that night—a sort of personally conducted tour. Off, then, we all went through interminable suites of rooms with magnificent pictures and furniture and endless corridors, looking very weird in the subdued light of the candles in the old-fashioned chandeliers. Kings and queens of England had stayed in the place, and every corner seemed to have a history. There were no less than forty guests' bedrooms, we were told, and nothing had been altered for generations. Since then the place with all its contents has been sold, and it is now completely transformed, and in the possession of a well-known alien financier.

When we returned to the smoking-room the conversation somehow turned on the supernatural, which was scarcely to be wondered at, considering the surroundings. Most of the company affected to smile at such superstition, and there was quite a psychical discussion on the *pros* and *cons* of the subject, in the course of which the dreaded spectres of the house we were in were mentioned. Still the sceptics prevailed, whereat an elderly, hard-headed barrister declared that in his opinion men had been hanged on far less evidence than there was in favour of the existence of ghosts. All this was very cheerful, as may be imagined, in a haunted house at midnight.

"Well, ghosts or no ghosts, I'm off to bed since we've got to be up early," said some one, taking up his candlestick. The others followed, and although I wanted to go also, I found myself engaged in conversation with my host just at the moment, so we were left alone.

A few minutes after the clock struck twelve, and he suddenly jumped up, saying he had no idea it was so late, and that if I wanted to have a read and didn't want to go to bed yet there was no hurry, I could easily find my way upstairs to my room by myself, as his was in the other wing, and with a pleasant

good-night he left me. The sound of his footsteps echoed through the hall, then all was silent save for the moaning of the wind through the corridors.

I am not superstitious as a rule, but after the conversation I felt just a bit "nervy." The candles were burning low in the sconces, so there was naught for it but to go to bed. Picking up my candlestick, I carefully extinguished all the lights in the room, and made my way across the marble hall and up the grand staircase. As I gradually approached the corridor where the footman had seen the apparition, I admit I felt a creepy sensation down my back, and my hair appeared to become rigid—but there was nothing for it but to continue going upstairs. At this moment the moaning of the wind seemed to increase till it was almost a shriek.

Suddenly on looking over my hand which was shading the candle, I distinctly saw something going up the stairs just ahead of me, and turn down the corridor. I had no time to distinguish what it was, for at that moment my candle blew out. I stood in the dark rooted to the spot with horror. My heart jumped into my mouth. I was about to shriek out, when, as though with a flash, the thought crossed my mind, "Perhaps they are having a practical joke on me, and I am being watched. I mustn't show the white feather." It was only an idea, but it brought me back to my senses, and in an instant I felt as cool as a cucumber. Taking out a match I calmly relighted my candle and then a cigarette, and proceeded upstairs to my room slowly. Once there, I had a good look round to prepare against possible surprises during the night.

It was ghostly looking enough in all conscience sake, but that no longer perturbed me. As I have explained, there were four doors in the room; these I proceeded to examine. On opening them I discovered a recess formed by the thickness of the wall, then another door leading into the adjoining

rooms, all of which were unoccupied. None of the doors had keys or bolts and I didn't like to barricade them, when I thought of something that would effectually prevent any one entering my room unawares. On the floor in front of each door I placed some object—a chair lying down, the washhand jug, the basin with water in it, and the coal-scuttle. I then went to bed, and although the firelight worried me a bit at first I soon fell asleep.

I was awakened by a loud crash and lusty swearing. I sat up in bed in affright for a moment, trying to collect my wits and remember where I was, for it was pitch dark. Then I heard the intruder groping his way across the room. Something was unfastened, and the next instant a flood of sunshine came through the window. It was morning, and a man-servant had come in with my tea. He had fallen over the chair and barked his shins and broken the tea things, and was standing gazing with blank astonishment at the extraordinary arrangement of the room. I tried to explain to him the reason for it all, but I had a notion after he went out that he had his own ideas on the subject.

CHAPTER VII

My first visit to the office of the *Illustrated London News*—The office-boy and my drawing—Mr Mason Jackson, the Art Editor—I meet Mr William Ingram—His encouragement and acceptance of my drawing—A fateful morning for me—Engaging personality of Mr William Ingram and his brother Mr Charles Ingram—Their remarkable ability—Fascination of the office—A private club—Interesting men there—Lunching places in the neighbourhood—Carrs—The Devereux—Wilkinson's *à la mode* beef shop—Illustrated Journalism in those days—Drawing on the wood—The art of the wood engraver—The "Special Artist"—An amusing anecdote.

I HAD not been long in my new studio when something came to pass which had a very important bearing on my ultimate career. One fine morning when I felt it would do me no harm to have a few hours off, it suddenly occurred to me to try my luck and submit a black and white drawing to one of the illustrated papers, so selecting a specimen of my work that I had given special care to, I put on my best suit of clothes, made myself look as smart as possible, and went down to the office of the *Illustrated London News*. In those days the editorial office was in an old building in Milford Lane, almost opposite the present one, and known as Milford House.

I had anticipated no difficulty whatever in seeing the Editor, for it was the first time I had ever called on one, and therefore did not know of the obstacles to be surmounted before admittance to an editorial sanctum could be obtained, if one was quite unknown; —so I was a bit disappointed when a mere office boy

informed me that if I gave him my drawing he would take it in to the Art Editor, Mr Mason Jackson, and I could wait if I liked, but that he did not think he would see me, as he was very busy, or something to that effect. This was scarcely what I had expected, but there was no help for it, I felt it was the usual procedure, so I took the drawing out of its paper and the youth picked it up with bored carelessness and left me standing in the passage.

I shall never forget my first impression of the office of the *News*, and even now, after all these years, the smell of printers' ink always recalls it.

George Augustus Sala used to say that a mere glimpse of the interior of Charing Cross Station when he passed by in the Strand was sufficient to always remind him of Italy and the Sunny South, and make him long to be catching a train and going abroad.

How it came about with me I do not know, but I recollect that whilst waiting in the dingy office visions rose in my mind of wars—of perilous travel in far-away lands—of glorious adventure, and all the exciting and arduous work of the "Special Artist" or correspondent of a big paper, and in the few moments I was kept waiting I had made up my mind what my career should be henceforth if I could have any say in it. No humdrum studio life for me, I would see the world—and if needs be exchange the brush for pen and pencil.

I was aroused from my train of thought by the return of the office boy, who informed me to my delight that the Editor would see me, and I was forthwith ushered into Mr Mason Jackson's room.

If I had been impressed with the outer office, it may be imagined what my feelings were now. I felt like a child in a toy shop. The room was littered with copies of the paper—photographs and black and white drawings, wood blocks were everywhere—on shelves, in open cupboards, and on the floor. At a table in the centre sat a benevolent-

looking elderly gentleman with a grey beard; this was the Art Editor. Standing by his side was a young man to whom he was giving instructions with reference to a print he had before him.

"Mr Price, sir," introduced the boy.

Mr Jackson looked up, and said did I mind waiting a moment—of course I didn't.

His table was covered with war sketches evidently just received from Melton Prior who was at the time in Egypt, and there was, as it were, I thought an atmosphere of the battlefield, strangely out of keeping with the room, about these thin sheets of paper lying carelessly about. After a few moments the young fellow left the room, and Mr Jackson rising from his seat came towards me with my drawing in his hand. In kindly tones he expressed his regret that he could not make use of it, but if I had anything else at any other time to show him he would be glad to see it—mere polite platitudes, I thought—so I felt very mortified and dejected as my hopes had gone up on the strength of his seeing me, for I was young then, and unused to disappointments.

There was nothing to be said, so I started wrapping up the drawing again. As I was doing so a gentleman came bustling into the room—a breezy cheerful looking man of about thirty-five years of age, he held a proof sheet of a picture in his hand, and from his manner was evidently some one of importance. It was Mr William Ingram, the present baronet, and one of the proprietors of the paper. If he had come in two minutes later I should have been gone. He saw me tying up my parcel.

"What have you got there—a drawing? Let me see it."

I took it out again, and he went with it to the window, where he examined it critically, and then turning to me asked about my work and where I had studied. He seemed interested, and after a pause said, "I'll use this drawing; come and see me when

you've got some more to show. You might do some work for me."

I felt too delighted and excited to say more than to express my thanks. In the light of my subsequent travels and campaigns for the paper that meeting with Mr William Ingram that morning was indeed fateful.

From that day I got on most friendly terms with him and his brother Charles, whom I subsequently met. Scarcely a week passed without my going down to the office and submitting a drawing or a suggestion for work—of course with varying success.

I found the Ingrams' charming personalities, and I always felt flattered to be reckoned amongst their friends. William Ingram was then Editor in chief, manager, and, in fact, everything in the office, although he was ably seconded by his brother. I was not long in realising that underlying their remarkable unconventionality, and almost boyish impetuosity, was a wonderful faculty for grasping in an instant the possibilities of any suggestion laid before them. If they said "no" to anything it was practically certain there was "nothing in it." It was the personal magnetism of the two brothers that somehow made me stick to the *News*, for, curiously enough, although there was never anything of a binding nature between me and the paper, yet I should not have dreamed of offering my black and white work elsewhere, and I never had cause to regret it.

There was to me an indescribable fascination about "the office" which I should have found it difficult to explain, though perhaps it was because I was always hoping, Micawber-like, that something would turn up, and at any moment I might get "marching orders," and be off somewhere across the seas. I realised that there was within me a latent fire of restless activity which impelled me to go down to the office. Meanwhile I soon found out that once one had one's *entrée* at

the *News* you could drop in whenever you chose. There was no necessity to send in your name; it was almost like a private club where they were pleased to see you, and you were pretty sure of meeting a friend to have a yarn with, and hear all the gossip of the paper in which we all felt we had an interest. Such a delightfully free and easy state of affairs could not exist in a newspaper office nowadays.

I realise more than ever the march of time when I go down to the palatial offices of the paper now and try and recall the building as it was twenty-five years ago, when I used to go there as a youth —for all is so changed now that it is unrecognisable. What an interesting crowd of men it was, too, that one met there. Old William Simpson, the veteran of War Artists (who was out in the Franco-German War); Melton Prior, the ubiquitous "Special," seldom in London for long; Caton Woodville; Forestier, with his delightful pen and ink work, newly arrived from Paris; Montbard, the communist, another clever French draughtsman; Seppings Wright, the *News* authority on warships, and dear old John Latey, the popular editor of the *Penny Illustrated.* Perhaps, though, one of the most important men at the office in our eyes, after the Ingrams, was the genial cashier, Lister Goodacre, because he could hurry the cheques through, and many an I.O.U. would he cash on his own responsibility; but this was years before the paper was turned into a big company, and in the palmy days of the newspaper artist.

Several of us would often go out and lunch together, either across the road to Carrs, where many well-known journalists used to gather, or round to the "Devereux," a quiet little old-fashioned place where you got perhaps the best chop or steak and boiled potatoes in the neighbourhood, or else, if we wanted to do it on the cheap, to Wilkinson's *à la mode* beef

shop in Fleet Street, where for less than a shilling you could have quite a good feed if you did not mind the crowd, which was pretty rough. And after lunch, if Melton Prior was in town, we would perhaps go up and have a smoke in his room in the building in the Strand before returning to our work.

Those were the days of drawing on the wood and the wood engraver, and to be of any real use to an illustrated paper one had to be proficient in this particular branch, which was almost an art in itself. It took some little time to get accustomed to drawing on the block itself, as, of course, everything had to be reversed.

Art reproduction has made such vast strides since those days that it may possibly be of interest to recall the tedious methods by which a newspaper drawing was then reproduced by wood engraving before the advent of mechanical reproduction. The wood block was made up of several pieces of box-wood keyed together so perfectly as to form a smooth surface on the front. When the drawing, which was either in wash or pencil, was finished, the block was handed to the wood engraver, and if it was required urgently it would be un-keyed and the pieces given to several men to work on, the head engraver having previously marked his suggestion for the general direction of the lines, so that all tallied ultimately. When the engravers had finished, the pieces would be re-keyed, and an "electro" made from the block for the Press, as the printing was not often made from the wood direct as in olden times, for fear of damaging the block.

In these days, when a picture can be reproduced in a few minutes practically, the tedium therefore of wood engraving may be realised. Still it was a wonderful art in itself, and some fine results were often obtained if time were no object, and it seems almost a pity it should have completely died out.

Of course a successful reproduction of one's drawing was largely dependent on the engraver's intelligence, who apparently would often, if embarrassed, follow out Punch's famous advice to bad spellers, "When in doubt make a blot."

Photography in those days had not yet even commenced to oust the draughtsman, and the "Special Artist" still had it all his own way when any war or big event was on the *tapis*, for the rich amateur correspondent with a camera had not yet put in his appearance, fortunately, so the work was entirely confined to a few men who had made reputations by their pencils in many arduous campaigns and expeditions. Now and again, of course, a new aspirant would come forward when something unexpected happened, and if the regular men were abroad would get his chance of distinguishing himself; but it was seldom they achieved honours, for "Special Artists," like war correspondents, are born, not made.

There was a story of an artist who was sent out to a war by one of the illustrated papers. It was his first experience, and he made a failure. The sketches he sent home being very poor and at times quite unintelligible.

One day on his return he was in the Editor's room, and endeavouring to explain that it was not quite his fault if his work had been unsuccessful, as there was no time to draw carefully under the circumstances. The Editor agreed with him in that respect; but pointed out that if he had not time to make a recognisable sketch of anything it would have been better to have indicated in writing what it was intended to represent, and picking up one of the artist's sketches, he continued: "Take this one, for instance—since you say you were in such a hurry that you had not time to draw it more carefully, why not have written above it 'This is a windmill'? Then our artist here would have known what it

was intended for, instead of which he had to guess."

"But it isn't a windmill; it's a man on horseback," replied the artist.

My ambition was to become one of the small group of "Specials," and I never missed an opportunity of bringing this idea of mine before the Ingrams. My chance was to come later; but for the moment I had to be content with the peaceful atmosphere of a London studio.

CHAPTER VIII

Off to the South of France to finish portrait—Adventure *en route*—Mentone *viâ* Elysium—On the Riviera—A funny incident on return journey—The Frenchman and the luggage—Painting at the docks, an episode—Curio-hunting in the wood—Tea-parties in studio—A good joke—The British workman—Re-arranging the drawing-room — Summer in the Scilly Isles — A large painting.

EARLY in the following year I received an invitation from my friends in Mentone asking me to go down there and spend a few weeks with them to finish the portrait. So one miserably cold night, when it was sleeting and raining, and all London shivering, I started for the South and the sunshine of the Riviera. I was bound on a pleasant mission, with a jolly holiday in front of me and all my expenses paid, so it naturally happened that I was in the highest of spirits, and filled with the romantic ideas of a young man.

Such being my enviable state of mind, it is not to be wondered at that a little occurrence at the station took to itself the proportion of an adventure. Doubtless most young fellows have had similar ones at different times of their youth, but when I recall this particular event I remember I felt that the gods had me in their especial good graces.

There were not many people going by the train. I had arrived in good time, and as I sauntered idly about on the platform before we started, in that aimless but enjoyable fashion which I always fancy is part and parcel of the commencement of a journey

one has been looking forward to, my eyes became riveted on something in a heavy travelling coat that seemed to me the very embodiment of feminine charm. She was wearing a thick veil, so it was only just possible to guess what her face was like; but from the glimpse one got of it under the gas-light there was not much doubt that she was an exceedingly good-looking young woman. She was alone, judging from her attire evidently going abroad, and when my discreet glances were rewarded by a faint but none the less bewitching little smile, I felt there was all the material for a very delightful journey, if only she were going South also.

The carriage she was in was fully occupied, so there was no chance of a *tête-à-tête* as far as Dover; but I looked forward to an opportunity during the crossing, and that glance at the railway station haunted me all the way down to the Coast. On the boat she must have disappeared into a private cabin, as I could not find her. At Calais still no sign of her, and I began to think she must have taken the Basle train, and looked upon the whole thing as an opportunity missed. But at the Gare de Lyon, while I was waiting for breakfast, my attention was drawn to a group of waiters apparently quarrelling for the possession of a lady traveller who had entered just in front of me, and to my delight I recognised my *charmeuse* of the previous evening.

Now or never was the moment, and as an inspiration I decided on a bold move. Keeping well in the background, I marked down the waiter who had captured her, and as he passed me I told him to lay my breakfast at the table next to hers, and then sauntered up and took my seat nonchalantly, and without appearing to see her. When she raised her veil I saw that she was positively beautiful (otherwise, of course, the story would not be worth relating). Well! She was going south as far as Cannes. There were no corridor carriages in those

days, and we got a compartment to ourselves, and my journey to Mentone was *viâ* Elysium, so it seemed to me, I remember. But it was a romance with one chapter only, as I never saw her again, nor did I ever discover who or what she was.

I had one of the jolliest times I ever spent whilst on the Riviera, although I was supposed to be there for work, for in the intervals of my painting I managed to see everything, and thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Of course I went everywhere, Monte Carlo, Nice, and back along the Coast into Italy, and enjoyed myself as I believe only a young man can on his first visit to the Sunny South. There were dances every night at one or other of the big hotels, no end of pretty girls, lots of pleasant excursions, and so what more could an artist want?

Painting under such delightful conditions, it is not to be wondered at that I did my very best, so the portrait was at length finished, not a little to my regret, and packed and sent off to Paris *en route* for the *Salon*. I would gladly have commenced it all over again, as it had been a pleasurable task from the very start. My experiences of portrait painting since then have not always left such happy memories—rather the contrary, in fact.

I should have liked to have prolonged my stay in the South, for it seemed a pity to leave the lovely warm sunshine and return to England, where from all accounts they were having nothing but cold and wretched weather. Still there was no help for it, and I recollect that the day I left it seemed finer and warmer than ever, and an ideal spring morning. Three very decent young Englishmen, whose acquaintance I had made at Mentone, were returning to England also, so we agreed to travel together and have a mild game of cards *en route*.

Naturally we wanted a compartment to ourselves. It is an Englishman's weakness to desire to be

isolated when travelling. There were a lot of people going by the train, so it looked like a difficult matter keeping out intruders on our privacy; however, we successfully accomplished this at Mentone. The question was could we manage it further on at Monte Carlo, where there was bound to be a crowd? Suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to one of us—and we immediately carried it out. We had a lot of hand baggage with us in the carriage — rugs, holdalls, hand bags—the usual paraphernalia without which Englishmen seem unable to travel, so we set to work and made up what looked like a figure of a man lying full length on one of the seats, and when it was completed I must say it was really wonderfully realistic, as we had even put a pair of slippers sticking out where the feet were supposed to be, and a cloth cap on the head, which was made of a waistcoat rolled up. Of course it was facing towards the wall. It was splendid, but it had a drawback — it took up too much room, so we were a bit cramped; but it had to be life-size, and we had made a giant while we were about it. However, we started our game of cards, and I am ashamed to say that we played practically the whole way to Marseilles, and the lovely coast scenery we were going through passed unheeded.

The dummy figure answered its purpose admirably, and looked so much like a very sick man that a mere glance at it was sufficient to deter any one from getting in—people don't like travelling with a *malade.* At one station there was such a crowd on the platform that we felt sure that some one would at last get into our compartment, and sure enough, several people made quite a determined rush for it, and for a moment it looked like being taken by storm—but we had forgotten our dummy friend. They didn't take long making up their minds to crush into another carriage rather than come into ours when they caught sight of the huge mass on the seat.

Just before we reached Marseilles, officials suddenly came along to examine the tickets, and before we had time to do anything the door was opened and one of them appeared.

We passed him our tickets, which he clipped and returned to us. Then to our horror, for we were hoping, I think, that he had seen through our "dummy" joke, he tapped it on the back and said gruffly, "Your ticket, sir, if you please," with an accent on the "if."

We all pretended to be absorbed in our game, though we had the utmost difficulty in keeping our countenances. As there was no reply he repeated his request more gruffly this time, then losing his patience at the continued silence he exclaimed, "I can't wait here all day—kindly wake up and let's have your ticket," at the same time emphasising his remark by shaking the sleeping figure vigorously. The result was obvious—the whole arrangement of luggage and rugs came apart, and the head rolled on to the floor. The official started back with a scared, "*Nom de D—— de D——*" and we lost all control over ourselves and burst into fits of laughter.

For a moment the ticket-collecter hesitated what to do, then, as he was evidently a good fellow, and with a sense of humour, he joined in our hilarity, and laughed so heartily that other officials and several people came to see what all the merriment was caused by. "Ah, ces Anglais comme ils ont des idèes droles" was expressed on all sides, and it was lucky for us it was treated as a joke.

Talking of trying to keep a carriage to oneself reminds me of an amusing incident that a friend of mine told us happened to him one day when he was starting from Paris for London. He was leaving by an early train, and as he had had a pretty thick night, and scarcely been to bed, he wanted if possible to have a carriage to himself as

far as Calais, so he bethought himself of the time-honoured trick of placing various articles of personal luggage on all the seats of the first-class smoking compartment he had selected, so as to make it appear the carriage was fully occupied. Then he settled himself down in a corner, and made himself comfortable. Many people came along and were effectually deterred from getting into the carriage on seeing all the luggage spread over the seats. To his annoyance, just at the very last minute, as the train was about to start a Frenchman hurriedly got into the compartment.

My friend muttered something in his execrable French that the seats were all engaged, but he naturally could not say much as all this luggage was not supposed to be his; but the intruder was evidently too pleased to have caught his train to notice what he said. Suddenly, just as the whistle of the engine was heard, and the train was about to move, to my friend's amazement the Frenchmen leaned out of the window and called out excitedly to a porter to come to the door, and then began rapidly to hand out to him the baggage from the seats, telling him that some passangers had evidently lost their train, so it was no use their luggage going on without them.

One can imagine the *dénouement*, and more especially as my man could only speak a few words of French; to rush to the window and arrest the exodus of his belongings was the work of an instant, as the train was actually in motion; but it was a very close shave indeed, and he almost lost his Gladstone bag in the scurry. As he sank exhausted into his seat his fellow-passenger, who by the way had good-naturedly helped him, looked at him drily, and, with a twinkle in his eye, said that it was a bit of luck he had not lost his things. My friend made no reply, as he somehow felt that the Frenchmen had had a good joke at his expense.

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"HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FLIRTING WITH HER AND CARRIED OUT THE IDEA SO CONSCIENTIOUSLY."

My life for the next few months presented no incidents of a particularly exciting character. Black and white work, alternating with painting, occupied my time pretty fully. I had always had a *penchant* for anything connected with ships and the sea, which is rather curious, for it is not that I ever had any inclination for a sailor's life, as I am a bad sailor and loath to be on the sea except in a dead calm. My actual bent was for soldiering; but the sight of the sea and big ships always carried me in my mind to far distant lands and travels and adventures in the wilds.

In those days the South West India Docks presented busy and animated scenes, as the Australian sailing clippers berthed there. So I used to spend happy days sketching amidst the big ships, whilst conjuring up in my fancy dreams of journeys I so longed to be starting on, and which were eventually to be realised beyond my wildest hopes. Many a picture did I sketch in the grimy docks, and usually with success, as they appeared to be my particular line, and I always managed to sell them.

I took a pretty girl down on one occasion, and painted her on board the *Rodney*, one of the largest of the Australian ships. I had a romantic composition in my mind (I was nothing if not romantic then), and one of the ship's officers, a good-looking fellow with whom I had got friendly, kindly offered to pose for me. The picture was to be entitled, "It may be for years." He was supposed to be in love with her, and carried out the idea so conscientiously whilst I was working that at last I got quite jealous of him, and the girl and I had a tiff on the subject in the train going back, and she told me she couldn't help it, she adored sailors. I didn't take her down to the docks again; as I felt instinctively that I was running the risk of her being carried off to Australia if I did, and I wanted to finish that picture.

My studio meanwhile was gradually becoming

more habitable, by that I mean more furnished, and I was able to resume the charming little lunches and tea-parties which had been so enjoyable in Marlboro' Hill. Tea, in particular, was always great fun, the studio was so conveniently situated that friends would frequently turn up uninvited in the afternoon on the chance of my being in, and when, as often happened, there were not enough cups to go round, the most extraordinary make-shifts, such as are only found in a studio, had to be utilised. Talking of tea reminds me of a funny incident.

I was always supposed (I say "supposed" advisedly) to be a bit of a ventriloquist. Well, Jeph was with me one afternoon when two nice girls arrived just as we had put the kettle on, so it turned out a lively little tea-party. It was the first time they had met him, and they found him very entertaining, for he was quite a ladies' man, as are most men who have lived long in the Far East. Suddenly it occurred to him to draw me out and get me to startle them with a little ventriloquism, as they did not know of my talent. Nothing whatever had led up to it, he had not hinted at it to me, so imagine their stupefaction when in a pause of the conversation he turned to me, *à propos* of nothing, and remarked casually, "There's some one up the chimney, Jules." Of course I knew at once what he was driving at, but I didn't feel in the mood just at that particular moment to give an entertainment, so I pretended not to hear him.

After a pause he repeated his remark, this time with emphasis; I saw the ladies now look at each other enquiringly, as indeed they might, for it was certainly a curious statement for him to make, as there was, I forgot to mention, a fire in the grate. Again I ignored his observation. Nothing daunted he persisted, and even went so far as to ask our friends if they hadn't also heard some one up there. They were now completely bewildered, and began

to look nervous. Turning to Jeph I said with mock gravity, "Look here, old man, are you suddenly dreaming or what? How can there be anybody up the chimney?" Seeing then that it hadn't come off, he agreed with me, and that perhaps after all he was mistaken.

The two ladies took their departure somewhat hurriedly, I thought.

Shortly after I saw them again. They referred to our tea-party, and mentioned Jeph. "What a nice fellow he seems; but has he had sunstroke out in the East that he behaves in such a peculiar manner?"

"Peculiar manner! in what way?" I asked, having completely forgotten the incident.

"Oh, when he talked of hearing a man up the chimney!"

Of course one could not very well expect dainty little ladies to sit on packing cases and drink tea out of thick china cups, and really enjoy themselves. Bohemianism was all very well, and they might do it once or twice, but they had to like you very much to come often and rough it, so I spent all my spare cash fixing myself up comfortably, and it was really surprising how far a few pounds would go when judiciously expended in an old furniture shop, and one could really pick up bargains in those days. I have a fine old grandfather's clock, for which I only gave twelve shillings in Henry Street. The dealer wouldn't actually guarantee it was in working order, but he put the quaint word "go-able" on the receipt, and strange to relate it has kept splendid time all these years.

It is remarkable what a lot of rubbish in the guise of bargains one buys when one has a few shillings to spare. Things that would under ordinary circumstances be consigned to the dust heap seem to acquire artistic value when on sale in the "antique" shop, in the neighbourhood of a studio. They become "decorative," and that means a good deal in a dusty

atelier, so I became bitten with curio-collecting mania, and have had it ever since, with results which would probably be very disappointing if I am ever forced to dispose of my "collection."

I soon found that if one could pick up odds and ends cheap, it often cost as much as they were worth to put them right. A cracked plate would want rivets, a cupboard a hinge or a key—in fact there was always something wanting that had made them cheap, and this reminds me of an experience I had of the genus British workman, which, trivial as it was, I always recollect when I want anything in the least out of the way done.

I had bought a cupboard with a rather peculiar handle to the door; something had gone wrong with it and it wouldn't turn properly, so I got a locksmith from Cochrane Street to come and put it right. He came and looked at it meditatively and went away and fetched his tool bag; then he took off his coat, put on his spectacles, unscrewed the lock, and proceeded to remove the works—informing me they wanted oiling. He then remembered he had no oil with him, so I had to give him some of mine. It now seemed pretty plain sailing, and with the remark that I should find it work all right when he'd got it back in its place, he started putting it together again. But his fingers now seemed to have suddenly become all thumbs; as fast as he put in one little screw another dropped out, and he was busy looking for them and picking them up from the floor. Thinking I was making him nervous by standing looking on, I moved away and pretended to be working.

I could hear him muttering to himself as he kept dropping bits of the lock. Then he suddenly asked me if I could lend him a screw-driver as his was no good—it was too large or something. I happened to have one to suit him—so off he started again. It must have been hot work, for he kept taking off his spectacles and mopping his forehead whilst he was

groping for odd bits and screws he had let fall on the floor. I continued to appear to be absorbed in my work. After many efforts and much reviling at himself and his Maker he at length succeeded in getting the lock into its position again, when suddenly in an extraordinary attempt to hold it in its place with his right hand, whilst with his left he extracted the last screw from the back of his mouth, where he had placed it for safety, the whole thing fell to the ground and came to pieces again. To my surprise he made absolutely no comment this time, but set to work again and apparently replaced it. Then he got up and put on his coat.

"Have you done it?" I ventured to enquire.

"No, I give it best, guv'nor," was his laconic reply, and picking up his tool bag he walked out.

It was about this time that I became aware of the existence of that most irritating of personalities, the souvenir collector. Perhaps it was because I was beginning to "get on," but anyhow I recollect how it would jar on my nerves when I discovered that I was generally expected to make a sketch portrait or contribute a drawing to my hostess's collection or album if I accepted a week-end invitation. At first I was inclined to look on such a request as a very charming compliment, till on one occasion I had placed before me an album which was nothing more or less than a sketch book of extra large size, and in which were already several highly finished drawings. "Do please draw something in my book—anything—no matter how rough." Then it flashed across my mind that I was expected to "work my passage" as it were, and at least to contribute something as important as what was already in the book. It was an extremely ingenious method of getting together a collection. Doubtless my experiences are similar to those of other artists, so I feel sure they will agree with me that to give something of one's own accord is one thing, but to be asked pointedly for it,

whether it be a sketch, a song, or an entertainment, is quite another matter. I have often thought how curious would be the impression of, say, a doctor or a solicitor if they found they were being asked for professional advice gratis, on the strength of being invited to a dinner or a week-end party.

My experiences in this direction were not always confined to making a drawing. I remember on one occasion spending a week-end with some friends. I had already done sundry sketches in their "album" so might have reasonably imagined myself immune from further taxation in the souvenir line. To my surprise my hostess remarked to me during dinner, "I am going to ask you to help me re-arrange my drawing-room before you go, Mr Price. You've got such taste in these matters, so I know it won't worry you, etc." It was very complimentary on her part no doubt, but it was merely a variation of the album trick, and I felt irritated beyond measure at the idea that I had been invited with an object, and was expected to be busy. Then suddenly an inspiration for a practical joke occurred to me, and I determined to carry it out and have my revenge. In the drawing-room she broached the subject again, but I adroitly managed to postpone doing anything till the following evening.

The drawing-room, I may mention, was a very large and well-furnished apartment with full-sized grand piano and numerous sofas, cabinets, pictures, and the usual paraphernalia. After dinner my host and hostess were so insistent on my carrying out my promise to re-arrange everything that I had no compunction in following up my scheme. The guests were sent into another room in order to more fully appreciate the change later, then seating myself in a corner I persuaded my host to remove his coat and waistcoat as "there was work to be done." "We must make a thorough alteration, so will shift the rugs first," I said; "they had better be rolled up for

the moment, and, of course, the piano cannot be left where it is. It is far too suburban placed that way; you had better get some one to help you move it." So an obliging guest volunteered his services. Well, to cut a long story short, in less time than it takes to relate, the room which had looked very cheerful before, was now a complete wreck, and had the appearance of being packed up ready for removal. Everything was stacked in the centre of the room, even to the pictures, ornaments, and curtains. I should never have believed that so great a transformation could have been accomplished so quickly.

My hostess looked on meanwhile with a bewildered expression on her face; but she said nothing. When all was complete my host and his friend mopped their foreheads and waited for the next development. I pretended to be absorbed in thought. "What do you want us to do now?" they at length said. "Don't disturb me, I am thinking it out," I replied. "I want to fix up something really original."

There was silence for a few moments, then I started up and said dramatically to my hostess, "I'm awfully sorry, but my mind is a complete blank, and I can't for the life of me remember how I intended to arrange the room, so I suppose the best thing to do is to put the furniture back as it was." The look on her face was a study. Without a word she went out, leaving me with the two men.

"Shall I lend you a hand to put things straight again?" I asked with a laugh. "Not much," said my host; "I've had enough of furniture shifting for one night." When I got down the next morning everything had been replaced in its original position.

That year I was consumed with the ambition to paint something important for the Royal Academy, so I made a careful sketch of a subject I had thought out, and decided to paint it on a very large canvas. I forget the dimensions, but I remember I showed the sketch to Sir Frederick Leighton, who expressed

his approval of the subject, and as a sort of further encouragement to me to have a shot at it, said he thought that if I put it in a very narrow frame it might have a chance of getting hung. So I went off in the summer holidays to the Scilly Islands and painted it in the open air. It represented a stirring life-saving episode, and I got coastguards as models, and being nothing if not conscientious then, I painted it all on the rocks and on the very edge of the sea, many times risking my life in my determination to get the effect I wanted.

The Scilly Islands in those days were very quiet and primitive. It was eternal Sunday there, and so few visitors that it was possible to work anywhere in comparative solitude, and when not painting there was excellent deep sea fishing and wild bird shooting to give one distraction, added to which the curiously tropical character of the vegetation made one almost feel in the South of France. So I put in a very jolly holiday as well as a lot of hard work on the picture.

CHAPTER IX

Unconventionality of Bohemianism—Evening dress—"Going to have a bloater for tea?"—A week-end visit to my friend's "cottage"—The impromptu fancy dress dinner party—The *dénouement*—Amusing story of a fancy dress ball—The story of the bugler and the barman—Bacchanalian entertainments—The mysterious drink—Stories of Bohemianism.

I CAN recall nothing of a wildly exciting nature as having occurred during the three years I spent at No. 10 Blenheim Place, although there were many interesting incidents which at the time became magnified into events, but only by reason of their comparative significance, as a hillock on a straight level plain from the distance assumes the importance of a mountain. I remember that I worked hard and played hard, and I had plenty of time and opportunity for both, for one had one's life before one, and no cares beyond getting sufficient to pay one's rent, firing, and occasionally something to eat. This may sound like a solecism; but I really fancy it conveys the placid state of mind I was in during those years.

It was too early in one's career to be hide-bound by conventionality; if one chose even to go out without a collar or tie it didn't matter a jot. One's circle of influential acquaintances had hardly yet come into being. Those folk, whose opinion of ourselves we attach so much importance to in later life, did not worry us then.

As a man I knew remarked, if he chose to go out in his shirt sleeves the people who knew him didn't

care, and he didn't care about those he didn't know. Conventionality in every form was laughed at in the set I used to frequent. Most of my artist friends had studied abroad, so were imbued with my ideas of what Bohemianism meant, and there was no humbug about us. It was not "pose" in any sense of the word, I am convinced.

We had not a lot of money to spend, so why try and ape those who had it? "Going to have a bloater for tea, old man?" asked one of my pals of me one evening, as he ran across me in the street as I was hurrying along to a dinner-party without the slightest idea of putting on "side." Of course I was in evening dress, which afforded him the opportunity for his really funny remark, but which at the same time echoed his notion on the subject.

The mention of dress clothes in connection with Bohemianism recalls an amusing episode of this kind. A friend of mine, a distinguished author and playwright, had invited me to spend a week-end at what he called his "cottage" in the country. It was some little distance from town; but as I happened to have enough money to pay the railway fare I gladly accepted. The invitation was one of those that are first given casually, and which are never accepted right away off—you must really come and spend a week-end with us, old chap, sort of thing—no date mentioned. Well this time he fixed it up, and I said I would go.

My prospective host, I must mention, was apparently as typical a Bohemian as myself, and although I knew he made a good income out of his work, it never entered my head that he was in any sense a society man, and I had looked forward to a couple of days at his "cottage," in our usual unconventional go-as-you-please style. With this idea in my head I simply bundled a country knickerbocker suit, a couple of flannel shirts, a dressing-gown, and a few necessary odds and ends into a hand-bag, jumped

into a 'bus, and caught the train from Paddington I had been told I should be expected to come by.

When I arrived at my destination I did not find my host waiting for me as I expected, which somewhat surprised me, and I was obliged to make enquiries as to the best way to get to the house, which I knew from what I had been told was three miles away from the tiny little country station, when a porter came up, and touching his hat respectfully asked me if I was going to Mr So-and-so's, because if so they had sent the dog-cart over to fetch me.

Outside the station I found a very dapper turn-out waiting for me, so smart a conveyance, in fact, that I remember I felt ashamed of my particularly shabby and unpretentious "Gladstone" as it was hoisted up behind.

After a drive through lovely country we reached the entrance to a park with a lodge and big gates; into this we turned, and drew up at last at a delightful old country house. So this was my friend's "cottage"! I realised he had been pulling my leg.

A footman in livery ushered me into a spacious inner hall where tea was in progress, and I found a large party assembled. A glance round was sufficient to prove to me that this was not Bohemia at all, but smart society, and I felt hot at the thought that I had not come prepared as to toilet for such surroundings. I had not even brought my dress suit with me. I was then struck with quite a brilliant idea, as will be seen, which, if I could arrange it, would save me having to dress for dinner.

My host and his wife received me in most genial fashion, and I was introduced to the house party, which included several people I knew already, so I lost no time in putting my idea into execution, and at once explained that I had been almost on the point of having to say that I couldn't come, that some important work had turned up from the Paper. I should therefore have to get them to excuse me

and get back to town after lunch the following day at the latest. My friends very kindly said they would be sorry to lose me, but if I must go, of course I must.

During tea, which was very lively, I managed somehow to spring my idea on them. It makes me smile even now to think how they all caught on. Had they heard, I asked, of the latest craze at week-end country house parties of having impromptu fancy dress dinners. Of course no one had heard of it since I had only imagined it half an hour previously. They thought it ought to be splendid fun, why not have one to-night, suggested one of the guests — almost taking the words out of my mouth, for that was what I was driving at. What a capital idea! the rest chimed in. Well, to cut a long story short, after a lot of talk our host promised to give a prize for the most original costume.

It was agreed that every one would appear for dinner in fancy dress of some description, no matter how ridiculous and incongruous, so long as it was not the orthodox evening attire. So on that understanding, and with much laughter, we all separated at once, as there was no time to lose, and every one seemed imbued with the idea of evolving something strikingly novel. It may be imagined how delighted I was at the success of my ruse.

Fortunately I had brought with me a real Japanese dressing-gown and slippers, which were quite curiosities in their way, so I had no need to worry about a costume. Mine was ready, and had the additional advantage of being delightfully cool and comfortable and easily put on; as a matter of fact I had nothing but my pyjama trousers under it.

Well, as arranged, we all assembled in the hall before dinner, and although each arrival was received with roars of laughter, it was positively amazing how ingeniously and wonderfully most of the party had managed to fix up fancy costumes out of the most

extraordinary things, and at such short notice. One would have expected ludicrous results, instead of which the general effect was quite remarkable.

I remember I took in to dinner a lady who was got up as a pierrette, with powdered hair, a hat made out of an ordinary white conical jelly bag from the kitchen, with black pompoms on it, black pompoms, too, on the white bodice and short skirt, while black silk stockings and shoes quite completed a fancy costume that would have held its own anywhere.

One of the men looked like a Mexican with the tails of his evening dress turned up, low collar, big black bow, no waistcoat, red sash tied round his waist, and white duck trousers. Nothing could have looked more effective.

Every one had done his or her best to look attractive, and it was a huge success. I won't mention what was said about my "costume," except that it held its own well with the others. After dinner we finished up a delightful evening with a dance, and all agreed that I deserved a medal for my happy suggestion.

The next day I returned to town "to get on with my work." Shortly after I received from my hostess a copy of a weekly paper in which was a story written by her, almost exactly describing my impromptu fancy dress dinner, and making the hero of the piece also an artist; but it finished up somewhat differently to my episode. It told how the artist suggested the party, and how he had to return to town the following day, but she had sacrificed accuracy to effect in the *dénouement* which she had made distinctly funny. "I am writing" said the hostess, "to thank you for your brilliant suggestion last Saturday. We enjoyed the fancy dress dinner immensely. Come and liven us up again soon. Yours, etc. *P.S.* The enclosed was picked up in your bedroom after you had left." The "enclosed" was a pawn ticket for a suit of dress clothes.

It is odd how one story recalls another. The mention of fancy dress reminds me of a curious experience which a friend told me he had in connection with a big fancy dress ball. He was very keen on these dances, and put himself to no end of trouble and expense in getting himself up in costume.

On this particular occasion he fancied himself as Charles II., and on the eventful evening a dresser came from the *costumiers* to help him don the costume, as it was a very elaborate and difficult one to get into, unless one was accustomed to making oneself up, and besides which he had to wear a special wig of flowing hair and a false moustache and eyebrows.

It took him over an hour to complete his toilet, and when at last he was quite ready, and to his satisfaction, he looked at the clock and discovered he was much too early. So having had a tiring day in the city, he thought the best thing to do was to have a little rest before going, in order to be in better form for dancing and an all-night's enjoyment. I forgot to mention that he had been looking forward to this ball for a long time, as he expected a very special lady friend of his to meet him there.

Well, he got the dresser before he left him to help him settle himself comfortably in front of the fire in his large arm-chair in such a way that he should not disarrange his wig or crush his lace, then telling his man to turn down the gas, and that he was not to be disturbed, prepared himself for a little doze. His description of the way he was spread out in the chair, like a lay figure, was screamingly funny.

The next thing he knew was waking up with a start, aghast—feeling very cold and stiff. The fire had gone out, and the pale grey of dawn was visible through the curtains. For the moment he could not recollect where he was or what he was doing, then suddenly he remembered the fancy dress ball. Up he jumped to see the time. To his horror he dis-

covered it was five o'clock in the morning—he had slept peacefully in the arm-chair since nine o'clock the previous evening. His language may be imagined as he divested himself of his regal apparel and went to bed.

Whether or not unconventional ideas help one to get on or make anything so far as one's work was concerned, is a matter which I will not pretend to discuss, although I have my own ideas on the subject now. I am simply recalling my impressions of those days when I was well on the right side of thirty. I loved the life then.

The Bohemianism which existed in St John's Wood in my time would not be possible nowadays; everything is so changed, and possibly for the better, although there are doubtless many men like myself who regret the transition. It is not that we would care to live again in that happy-go-lucky fashion, but the thought that it would no longer be condoned in these days of taxi-cabs and motor cars.

Much that took place in St John's Wood studios that I knew savoured of Montmartre anglicised, with the exception that there was a good deal of hard drinking—in the shape of whisky especially—that was non-existent among the artists in Paris. In this connection I recall an amusing and typical instance of this particular form of English Bohemianism.

On Queen's Terrace there was a small public-house called "The Knights of St John's," where several of us used to meet for lunch, as they provided a really excellent shilling ordinary, as I have said. The barman was an Army Reservist. He had been a bugler in some cavalry regiment, the 5th Dragoon Guards, if I remember rightly.

Opposite the "pub" is a narrow, gravelled alley leading to Finchley Road. In this passage were several studios, and the one nearest to the "Knights of St John's" was occupied by two artists, one of whom was rather a clever amateur musician as well.

They were neither of them exactly teetotallers—rather the contrary, in fact—and as they were fairly well-to-do, they dispensed liquid hospitality with a lavish hand. This was well known, and they had many visitors at all times, the result being that it frequently would happen that their stock of whisky or other refreshment would run out. As they kept no servant, living as they did in the studio in thorough Bohemian fashion, they would take it in turn to go out and across to "The Knights" to fetch what was required.

Suddenly a really brilliant idea occurred to the musical one. He was rather good on the cornet, so he got the barman to teach him a few military bugle calls, and it was arranged that they were to have certain meanings when sounded from the door of the studio—as, for instance, if he gave the "*reveillé*," it meant that they wanted a bottle of whisky; the "last post," a bottle of gin; "stables," a quart of bitter, and so forth—and the barman would send it over. The scheme answered admirably, and, as may be imagined, caused much amusement in the vicinity.

The open-handed hospitality of this particular studio was well known, and one heard of wild orgies there at times; but these festivities invariably took the form of drinking bouts, to which no women were ever invited.

I remember a model telling me that on one occasion on the morning after one of these Bacchanalian entertainments, on arriving at the studio at 10 o'clock for a sitting, she found the whole floor of the place covered with sleeping revellers lying just where they had fallen on being overcome by the effects of the carousing. She described the scene as an extraordinary one, as it doubtless was.

In those days the first thing a man did when you went to see him was to ask you to have a drink, and the bottle was handy at all times.

A pal of mine told me of an amusing practical

joke he played late one night on an acquaintance he had met on his way home, and on whom he had taken compassion and offered a drink at his studio. Of course he did not refuse ; but on the way my friend suddenly remembered that he hadn't a drop of whisky left in the place. He didn't know what to do, so when they reached the studio he pretended he hadn't got a match on him to light the gas, so started hunting around for a box in order to gain time and think out how to break the dreadful news. "Don't bother about lighting up on my account," said his guest. "I can manage to find the way to my mouth in the dark ; let's have the drink and I'll be off." Then an idea occurred to my friend.

An empty bottle and a jug of water were on the table. Picking up the glass he said he would give him something very special, and pretended to pour from the bottle into it, and taking up the jug, put the time-honoured question, "Say when?" "Oh, full up, I haven't had a drink for nearly a hour, and I'm as parched as a limekiln," was the reply. So up it was filled to the brim. "Well, here's luck, old man," said he, and drank off the glass of water in one gulp without even stopping to take breath. "That was fine," he said, as he put down the glass. "I wanted it badly. No, I won't have another—thanks awfully, good-night." The next day they happened to meet again, and the visitor of the previous night remarked to my friend, "That was a stunning drink you gave me yesterday. What was it?"

Of stories of Bohemianism of this type there were no end ; one could probably fill a volume with them alone. Here are some more sufficiently funny to bear telling.

One of the most distinguished of the younger artists, whose name I won't give for obvious reasons, was married and lived with his wife in a sort of studio suite. Their married bliss was only marred with one thing, and that was the weakness of the

artist for boon companions and whisky. Otherwise he was a model husband, and the couple were devoted to each other. The curious part of this was that he would leave off the drink for days at a time, and to all appearances have turned over a new leaf, and then suddenly by an uncontrollable impulse he would break out again. To his credit it must be said that he always regretted it afterwards, and felt heartily ashamed of himself.

On the occasion I am about to describe he had been exceptionally "good" for quite a long time, and had been quite a model Benedict, so much so, in fact, that his wife one Saturday evening told him that it would perhaps do him no harm to go down and spend an hour or two with his friends at the Savage Club. He did not require much persuasion, and promised not only that he would not drink, but that he would not stay out late, and would be back again before twelve. This he said with the sure conviction that he would carry it out.

The inevitable happened, as might have been expected. He was a very popular fellow, and it was nearly five o'clock when he rolled home. He was very fuddled, but still had enough intelligence left to realise he had broken his word with his wife.

It was a lovely summer morning, and the sun was shining brilliantly. I forgot to mention that their bedroom led out of the studio. Taking off his boots as quietly as possible, he crept into the room. He was in luck's way; his wife was fast asleep and had not heard him come in, so he undressed and tried to climb into the bed without disturbing her; but he was very unsteady, and of course woke her. To his surprise she turned round drowsily and asked him why he was "getting up so early." He had not the heart to tell her he was only just coming to bed, when an inspiration occurred to him, and he told her that he could not sleep any longer, and it was such a fine morning he was going to take his sketch

book and the dog and go for a stroll up to Hampstead. And he actually dressed again, tired though he was, and walked up to the Heath.

The other story, which is also humorous, was of a somewhat similar character. Another friend of mine, also a married man, burst out now and then. He had on this particular occasion been to a card party, and when at last he made his way homeward he had no idea whatever of the time, and he was so knocked up that he fell asleep in the cab.

The cabman woke him up when he reached his destination. With unsteady steps he made his way to his street door, when, much to his astonishment, he saw it was wide open. The discovery had the effect of instantly pulling him together. His first impulse was to get into a violent rage at the carelessness of his servant; then it struck him that burglars must have broken in. Yes, there was no doubt about it. He thought it best not to alarm the household, so he decided to wait where he was until a policeman came along before he did anything.

Whilst he was standing, or rather leaning, against the railing, the cook came out with a pail of water to clean the steps; she had left the door open while she went to sweep out the hall. It was a quarter to eight in the morning!

There was another story of a somewhat similar character they used to tell of a distinguished music hall artiste who also lived in the neighbourhood. He was a very late bird, and seldom got home until well on in the small hours. On one occasion he drove up to his house at 9 o'clock in the morning. A policeman who was passing, and who knew him well, called out cheerily, "Good-night, sir."

In the quaint little alley I have referred to, which led from Queen's Terrace to Finchley Road, there were only studios, and I never pass through it without remembering a funny occurrence there one day. Yeend King had one of the studios, and I often used

to go round and have a smoke with him. One Sunday morning I strolled round and found a typical top-hatted *bourgeois* waiting outside the door—a picture-dealer probably. He was evidently in a great state of irritation, and glad of an opportunity to air his grievance, and although I was quite a stranger to him, and was about to ring the bell, he said testily, "It isn't any use doing that, I have been waiting here for over an hour, and he hasn't come back yet. Disgusting making an appointment and keeping one waiting like this! I have a good mind to go away and not trouble about seeing his damned picture at all!"

I then saw that pinned on the door was a card on which was written "Back in ten minutes." Almost mechanically, whilst we were speaking, I rang the bell, and to our surprise King, palette and brushes in hand, opened the door immediately. He nodded to me, then turned to the top-hatted gentleman and said, "I like your idea of keeping an appointment, I have been waiting in for you since eleven o'clock and now it's past twelve."

I thought I would act as peacemaker and pointed to the notice on the door. It then appeared that King had gone out for a few minutes and forgotten to take the notice off on his return.

CHAPTER X

In Paris again for the "Vernissage"—Amusing incident on return journey—Keeping a carriage to oneself—I meet Captain Hargreaves —The Mount, Bishopstoke — Delightful hospitality — His yacht *Ianira*—A particularly pleasing souvenir. I join the "Artists'" Volunteers—Sir Frederick Leighton, Colonel the South London Brigade — The grey-uniformed regiments — Distinguished men amongst the officers of the Corps—My first march out—Easter Review at Brighton—Fun out with the girls—A practical joke —Easter Monday Field Day—Leighton, an ideal Colonel—An instance of his indefatigability.

THAT year I exhibited two pictures at the *Salon*, the portrait I had painted at Mentone and the large canvas which I had painted at Gorleston.

I went over to Paris for the "Vernissage," and was delighted to find I had been very well treated, and was "on the line" with both pictures; whilst, judging from the press notices, I had been "spotted" also. On my way back to London I had a somewhat curious experience, which ended in a most pleasant way.

I was leaving by an early train, and as I had had somewhat of a wild time the previous night, and had not got to bed until an advanced hour in the morning, I determined to try and keep a compartment to myself on the train, so as to be able to have a good sleep as far as Boulogne. With this idea I got to the station in good time, and having found an empty carriage proceeded to occupy all the seats by placing articles of baggage everywhere. Whilst doing so I noticed an elderly gentleman, of very distinguished presence, with a grey

beard, who had apparently already secured his seat, strolling up and down the platform.

Just as the train was about to start, and I was settling myself in my corner, congratulating myself on the success of my ruse, he appeared at the door followed by a valet carrying a valise and hat box, and in the coolest manner got up into the compartment in spite of its "full" appearance. His man having placed his baggage on the rack and left, the gentleman then turned to me, and in the most affable way enquired if I should require all the corners, because if not, he wouldn't mind having one himself. Of course I had no option but to remove my things, which I did, feeling rather small at being bowled out so neatly. As he sat down he remarked with a genial laugh that he was an old traveller, and had often tried on the same plan himself. The idea seemed to tickle him, and we soon got into conversation, when I found him so sympathetic and entertaining that by the time we reached Boulogne we were almost like old friends.

My newly-found acquaintance was a Captain Hargreaves, and when we separated at our arrival at Charing Cross, he had given me his card and a cordial invitation to go and spend a few days with him at his place at Bishopstoke near Southampton; he had also promised to come and see my studio.

It is often remarkable how chance meetings such as this lead to lasting friendships, and so it was in this case.

Captain Hargreaves was quite a character in his way, and his place, "The Mount," was a charming sort of Liberty Hall, as he called it, where one received a most hearty welcome. He had been a great whip in his time, and I believe was said to be the only man who had ever driven a four-in-hand at full trot down the High Street of Southampton and into the courtyard of the "Dolphin Hotel," without having to draw rein—somewhat a daring feat.

When I met him, however, his heart had gone wrong, so he had had to give up such mad pranks. Fishing and yachting were then his sole amusements, and there were several miles of good trout fishing on a stream which ran through his estate. I remember that at intervals along the bank there were seats with lockers to them in which were to be found refreshments for his guests at all times — a very thoughtful and hospitable notion indeed.

His yacht, *The Ianira*, was a very fine schooner of about 375 tons, with auxiliary speed, and perhaps one of the best of its class in those days. As Hargreaves was a captain in the Naval Reserve, all the crew were in uniform. We would drive from the house in great style in the four-in-hand down to the jetty, and be taken off to where the yacht lay in Southampton water in a steam pinnace, in quite man-o'-war fashion.

There was a large billiard-room and picture gallery built on to the house, which was full of modern pictures and statuary. One evening we were seated there smoking, when Hargreaves remarked that my large picture from the Paris *Salon* would look very well on the end wall, and if I didn't want the earth for it he would buy it. Needless to say it ended by its being sent down, and I went and spent a week-end to superintend the hanging.

Now comes a particularly pleasing souvenir of what was otherwise an ordinary deal. He was delighted with the effect of the picture, and after dinner that evening wrote me out a cheque for half as much again as he had agreed to give for it, saying that he felt it was really worth it. I imagine there are not many artists who have had a similar experience.

It was about this time several of us developed tendencies of martial taste. I may possibly have had something to do with this, for, as I have said, I always had a decided leaning towards "soldiering."

I fancy it must have been the band and the uniform that attracted me. However, I induced two cousins of mine, and a particular chum, an old fellow student from Paris, to join the "Artists'" Volunteers, then the 20th Middlesex. And for the next two months we were all as keen as mustard on drilling, in order to be able to take part in the manœuvres at Brighton —in those days the great event of the year for the Volunteer Army.

Sir Frederick Leighton was the colonel of the regiment, which mustered about 750, and was considered then, as it is still, one of the "class" corps of London, that is, typical corps which attract a certain class. There were other regiments which shared with the "Artists" the honour of being thus distinguished. The London Scottish, The Queen's Westminster, The Inns of Court, and the Civil Service, and as all five wore grey uniforms and were always grouped together, they were known as The South London Brigade. There was a friendly form of rivalry in consequence, which helped considerably to keep a healthy *esprit de corps*.

Although known as the "Artists," it was not absolutely necessary to be an artist. When the corps was founded membership was confined to painters, sculptors, musicians, and so forth, and for many years the tradition was unbroken. Though, of course, there were many distinguished young artists in the ranks, there were several companies without any painters at all in them; while, on the other hand, there were one or two mainly composed of this fraternity. We joined one of these, H Company, commanded by D. W. Wynfield, a painter of some repute at the time.

The distinguishing character of all the five grey-uniformed regiments was, I believe, that they were not what was known as "Working Men's" corps. The "Artists" certainly was very much to the contrary, and the charm of it was that every

recruit on joining knew that if he stuck to it, and lived long enough, he had the chance one day of commanding the regiment. For the "Artists" "grow" their officers, as it is quaintly expressed.

From the very day one was enrolled you realised that slackness was taboo. And it was strange to note how soon one got to like the work, hard and monotonous though it was at first, of learning the elements of drill and military discipline. I remember it was a positive eye-opener to me to see the way my brother recruits unfailingly turned up of an evening—wet or fine.

Of course, the enthusiasm of the "Artists" still exists, for the corps is undoubtedly a popular one on account of its old associations, chiefly. But it can never again be the same as it was in the days of which I am writing, for the whole character of the regiment is changed.

Although it is still known as the "Artists," there are scarcely any artists in it now, and I believe no one deplores this state of affairs more than Colonel May himself, who has gradually seen this transformation coming about. Whether it is that the young painters of nowadays have not that sense of patriotism that animated their predecessors, or that the new school of artists that has sprung up considers it *infra dig.* to go in for anything of so manly a character as soldiering, it is hard to tell. But the fact remains, the "Artists'" corps, smart and efficient though it be, is only "Artists" in name now.

This retrocession, for one can call it nothing else, is still more remarkable when one recalls only a few of the men who made big names for themselves, and who in their early days passed through the ranks. Sir Frederick Leighton, Sir Edward Poynter, Sir A. E. Waterlow, George Frederick Ross, Walter Severn, Edwin Long, Thomas Brock, Val Prinsep, Sir Victor Horsley, Sir J. Forbes-Robertson, Dr

Jameson (the late Premier of the Cape), Sir Edward Busk, Sir Joseph Barnby, Colonel R. W. Edis Colonel Walter C. Horsley—the last two successively commanded the regiment after Sir Frederick Leighton. These names will be sufficient to convey some idea of the men who helped to make the "Artists" what it always has been — one of the crack regiments within the Metropolis.

When I joined, and it is of interest to mention that the present colonel of the regiment was a brother recruit, the headquarters were at Fitzroy Square, and we were drilled in the grounds of the University College in Gower Street. It was tedious and uninteresting work at the beginning, but it all had to be gone through, for until you were passed by the sergeant-major you could not go and get your uniform.

I shall always remember the first outing we had with the regiment. We only managed to get our uniforms just in time; in fact, we were down at the tailors' on the Thursday night before Good Friday. At the last moment my trousers were not ready, so they lent me a pair, which were miles too large for me, as the waistband came up under my arm-pits, so it may be imagined how nice and warm and comfortable I felt, what with my tight tunic, belt and pouch and haversack, and overcoat rolled up like a horse collar across my chest, and wearing a helmet for the first time.

But it was all so delightful and novel, and when I "fell in" with my company when the regiment mustered and the band struck up and we marched off, I had the feeling that if this were soldiering it was very pleasant indeed. I often remembered this first impression in after years when I saw soldiering in real earnest, and when there was no music to liven it up.

The regiment, when the Easter manœuvres took place near Brighton, would send the baggage on

ahead two days before under a baggage-guard of half a company, and then entrain as far as, perhaps, Three Bridges, on the Good Friday, and march the rest of the way with other regiments, and there was generally a small sham fight *en route.* We would billet at a village that night, and it was a delightful experience when after the hard day's work we turned in, and slept in sweet-smelling hay and straw in barns and outbuildings.

On the Saturday the march would be resumed with more sham fighting, until Brighton was reached, when all the various regiments would march into the town with bands playing amidst great enthusiasm. That night we were quartered in some public building. After being dismissed to quarters and having tea and a wash and brush up, we would invade the front and the pier and give the girls a chance.

In those days one could have a lot of fun with the girls when you were in uniform, and we generally managed to find something to pair off with.

Talking of fun with the girls when in uniform reminds me of a laughable practical joke played on me at one of these Easter outings. It seems funny now, but it didn't amuse me a tiny bit at the time, I recollect. I picked up a jolly nice girl on the Saturday evening and fixed an appointment with her for the Sunday afternoon.

It was rather difficult to get away from one's pals, as there seemed to be some unwritten law that we should stick together when in uniform either on or off duty. I managed, however, to elude the crowd, and found my lady-love waiting at the trysting-place.

I had made discreet enquiries beforehand as to the best way to get to the most picturesque and retired walk in the neighbourhood, and learned that there was one that was known locally as "Lovers' Lane" on account of its seclusion. I therefore suggested

our wending our footsteps thither, and to my delight she consented, so we thithered. She knew the way, it appeared—but she told me she had only been there once before just to have a look at the place.

Once outside the town and away from prying eyes, I let myself go unreservedly, and with forage cap cocked jauntily over my right ear, and with my manly arm encircling her wasp-like waist, I felt I was indeed acting the "Tommy" to the very life—and I believe the young lady really liked it—so we must have made a picturesque and loving couple as we strolled through the leafy lane, whilst stopping at intervals for mutual regalement in the shape of unrestrained caresses of the most amatory nature.

At length we reached "Lovers' Lane," and I found it quite came up to its reputation, for it would have been difficult to find anything more adapted to the requirements of young and ardent sylvan lovers. A high straggling hedge shut it in completely from vulgar gaze, whilst overhead the trees formed a natural and charming bower, which effectually tempered the hot rays of the afternoon sun.

A mossy bank of most alluring appearance seemed to invite us to tarry awhile. My lady fair was not unwilling, and we were soon lying clasped in each other's arms in rapturous bliss, lost to the world and all its sordid pursuits, whilst the little birds sang in their sweetness around us. The next few minutes passed by unheeded as though in a dream.

Suddenly my companion gave a little startled exclamation and whispered in my ear: "Did you hear that noise? What is it?" I sat up and listened intently, then my attention was drawn to something quite close by. I thought at first it must be a snake in the hedge—or a big rat.

I watched it carefully, fascinated, as it were, when it gradually dawned upon me that it was a pair of human eyes peering through the hedge at us, and

not far away yet another pair, and yet another, and here and there on either side quite a number of glistening eyes and laughing mouths and gleaming white teeth. We were surrounded by lookers-on. At that moment I caught a glimpse of something of a familiar grey hue with a row of buttons on it, and in an instant I realised that I had been stalked by some of my own comrades, and that there had been an interested group of spectators of the whole of the tender episode!

I was of course furious, but thought it was best not to let them know I had seen them, as it would have upset my lady-love tremendously had she known of it, so I turned to her and said that I thought that there were snakes about, and that it would be advisable to go somewhere else.

She didn't want much telling, so up we scrambled and walked rapidly away. As we did so I heard a suppressed titter of merriment from the other side of the hedge, and what sounded like a discreetly suppressed cough. Some little distance on my companion said suddenly and anxiously: "I don't think that was really a snake we heard, do you?" "I don't think it really was," I replied truthfully.

However, to return to the serious side of our volunteer duties at the Easter Reviews. Sunday there was Church Parade, and then we were free for the day. Monday, Bank Holiday, we were out betimes, for it was a field day on the downs—with a big march past to finish up with.

All Brighton used to turn out to see this, and the most ludicrous incidents would often occur, for we always had a generous supply of blank cartridge and took the most daring risks, dashing right up and blazing away at the enemy at close quarters, the crowds of men, women, and children looking on, and when the "cease fire" sounded it would be like a fair all round, every one lying on the

grass if it were a fine afternoon, with hawkers selling fruit, nuts, ginger beer, and what not.

It was indeed a brave scene. Wanting in seriousness though it may have been, there is no doubt that it appealed tremendously to the people, and it was that that made the Volunteer Movement, and these Reviews in particular, so popular at the time, whether they took place at Brighton, or Southsea, or Portsmouth.

It must not, however, be inferred that it was all pomp and circumstance, for we did a good deal of hard work when there was no audience, at Aldershot in the summer, on Wimbledon Common, and elsewhere. Leighton made an ideal colonel—in fact, he was probably more strenuous in his work than many a commander of regulars.

If, as it has been described, genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains, then Leighton was indeed one, for in everything he undertook efficiency was his object, as, for instance, in his volunteer work, and, moreover, he expected every one around him to be as fully in earnest.

I remember one occasion at Wimbledon towards the end of an extremely tiring afternoon, he had given the command for some particularly complicated battalion manœuvre to be carried out. Somehow it was not done to his liking, and he ordered it to be repeated; this was done again and again without success, then Leighton, who had been gradually showing signs of considerable irritation at what he probably considered the want of intelligence of us all, called a halt, and seating himself firmly in his saddle, facing the regiment, he bawled out: "Well, gentlemen, I'm in no hurry, and I'm going to have this done properly if I stop out here all night."

I don't know whether this little speech had any effect, but anyhow we did not stop out all that night. This zeal on his part, so far from being

resented, only served to make him liked still more by the regiment, and it is safe to assert there was no more popular colonel of volunteers at that time than Sir Frederick Leighton. By his personality and quite remarkable assiduity he gave a brilliant example of what thoroughness and zeal can effect, the result of which is seen in the corps until this day. He gave up the actual command of the regiment to become the Honorary Colonel soon after he had been elected President of the Royal Academy, and then only on account of the increasing number of other duties thrown upon him in consequence. He was succeeded by Colonel R. W. Edis, also an officer of exceptional aptitude and presence, for his commanding figure and fine physique drew attention everywhere. Walter Horsley, the artist, succeeded him and maintained the great success and the old traditions of the famous corps, but, as I have said, painters have gradually ceased to take interest in volunteering, for reasons difficult to explain, and the corps is only "Artists" in name now.

CHAPTER XI

"Show Sunday"—Then a great event—Importance of exhibiting at the Royal Academy—Not a hall mark of talent—Significance of Show Sunday—The dealers' visits—The social crowd—Critics—What the artist has to put up with—Doubtful praise—Success in art not judged by financial results—Show Sunday stories—I send in my large picture—Sir Frederick Leighton's encouragement—I have no luck—Not hung "for want of space"—My dejection—Thoughts of enlisting—My girl pal—A real comforter—I gradually recover—Picture purchased by Walker Art Gallery—Katie's illness—Sad ending.

"SHOW Sunday," as the day before sending in one's pictures to the Royal Academy was called, was one of the great events of the year amongst artists, and every one who had anything like a studio, who was going to try his luck, would send out invitations to his friends to come and see his pictures before they went in. This was done to avoid disappointment to the friends, in case the works were not accepted, and they had no opportunity of seeing them outside the studio.

St John's Wood, which on Sunday afternoons usually presented an air of unruffled sanctimonious calm, was invaded by visitors "going the round of the studios," as it was called, and every one who happened to have a friend who knew a friend who knew an artist would try and get an invitation to one or other of the studios.

From the artist's point of view, the importance at that time of exhibiting at the Royal Academy was incalculable, for it was the principal exhibition of the year, the mere fact of having one's name in the

catalogue carried weight and seemed to entitle the artist at once to a certain consideration which he did not receive otherwise. "He exhibits at the Royal Academy" was the highest encomium the ordinary *bourgeois* could think of when describing an artist friend. In fact, at one time it was thought in certain suburban sets that a painter was entitled to put F.R.A. after his name if he had ever exhibited at Burlington House.

How many lives, which might have been otherwise profitably employed in commerce or elsewhere, have been wasted by the mere chance of being once hung at the Royal Academy, for it is needless to insist on the fact that the catalogue of that august institution does not necessarily convey the hall-mark of talent.

"Show Sunday" nowadays has lost most of its significance in consequence of the number of outside societies that have come into existence, and the reluctance of many painters to run the risk of not being "hung" if they send their chief works to the Royal Academy. But at the time of which I am writing it was almost a social function, and the big men especially had to be prepared for numbers of visitors, most of whom were complete strangers to them. Carriages and cabs and streams of well-dressed people woke up the echoes of quiet streets where not a soul would be seen on Sunday at other times of the year, and gave an importance to certain artists of those days which in many instances was not merited by the works they exhibited. Still all this movement and popular interest was a healthy sign, and there was no doubt that "Show Sunday" was, perhaps, the one day of the year when one could almost be sure of receiving a visit from one of the big dealers if you had something important to show him, for the reason that they knew they were certain to find their man at home all day. Dealers and publishers would generally endeavour to pay

their visits before the arrival of the social crowd, and I knew many an artist who would reckon to sell every picture he had on show, before the first ring at the bell after lunch. Those were indeed the good times for modern artists. Of course, it was not all honey, and sometimes it happened that a man had "spread" himself on some special subject all the year, only to be told by the dealer he was hoping to sell it to that it was not what he wanted after all; for the dealers were purely commercial, and only looked on the material side.

I remember Yeend King used to tell a funny story of a buyer coming to see his Academy pictures one day. They all represented Spring and Summer scenes up the river. He just glanced at them, then walked round the studio three times and turned to go out, saying to King as he did so: "I'm sorry I can't do a deal with you this time, but we have a growing demand for autumn tints, so these are no good to me. Good afternoon."

But if the candid criticisms of the dealers were hard to bear by reason of the fact that they represented an opinion of success or failure, what the poor artist had to put up with from amateur critics who came on the pretext of a friendly visit was maddening at times. Not the least irritating was often the ambiguous character of the praise one received.

A friend told me of a very influential person coming on one of his "Show Sundays," when he had quite an important picture on view. As he left he went up to the artist, and shaking him warmly by the hand, said: "I like your picture very much, it is so different from the work you usually do."

As a rule enthusiasm and praise were the order of the day, for Society folk are indulgent, and it costs so little to say nice things, never mind what one thinks. There were, however, some people who didn't attempt to disguise their feelings; one man in

particular, he was so outspoken that he was quite a terror, but his opinion was the more valued in consequence. On one occasion he had been invited particularly to go and see some pictures. He arrived, had a glance round, then said tersely: "What a beastly lot! Good afternoon," and walked out.

I think it will be conceded that the artist's is the only one of the professions where success cannot be measured by financial result. Many of the cleverest painters and sculptors I have known were as poor as church mice, yet they had made names for themselves, their work was highly spoken of in the Press, but their studios were full of unsold pictures, all of which had attracted much notice when on exhibition.

In other professions, as, for instance, that of medicine or the law, success is gauged by banking accounts and the position a man can afford to keep up, and what his will is proved at, at his death. A poor doctor, or a poor solicitor, however clever, can never be considered to have been successful, as success in their case is always paid for in solid coin of the realm.

It has been said that an artist may not make a deal of money out of painting a picture, but the pleasure he derives whilst painting it is compensation far beyond gold. This may be so, but it doesn't pay his rent or relieve him of all the petty worries after the picture is painted.

With this idea continually in one's mind, it may be imagined with what anxiety one wanted to know the result of months of hard work; as it often meant comparative affluence or *dans la purèe*—anglicised, "stony-broke" for some time to come. I always thought that this explained the peculiar condition of Bohemianism that is always associated with Art, and is always more or less condoned.

Amusing stories occur to me in connection with "Show Sunday." One in particular of a landscape

painter, who married a very vulgar, jealous, but good-looking woman. He never dared to have a "Show Sunday" in consequence, but on one occasion quite a lot of friends, several ladies included, turned up during the afternoon. His wife happened to be out at the time, but the visitors were still in the studio when she returned. In she walked and stood with her arms akimbo, as though transfixed at the sight of so many people in the place. Her husband, a mild little man, was about to introduce her, when she rapped out in her coarse voice: "What's the meanin' of this? What are all these devils doin' 'ere?" Needless to add the visitors did not stay on!

A great many of the people who went round the studios of that day did it more because it was the thing to do rather than from any particular interest in painting, which reminds me of a remark made by a fashionable beauty to her attendant cavalier, as they came out of one of the studios, "I like water-colour drawings better than oil paintings." "Why?" was the natural query. "Because one can see one-self so nicely in the glass!"

Here's something that happened to me. A man whose opinion I particularly wanted to have on a picture came and saw it, and after looking at it for some minutes whilst I stood by expectantly, he turned to me and said: "That's the best frame, Price, I've ever seen in your studio."

"Show Sunday" was from 3 till 6 o'clock, but it would generally last till dark. In some studios they gave tea, but not often, too many uninvited guests would turn up with one's own friends for this to be possible. As a rule, you were generally glad when you saw the last of your visitors, as it would frequently happen that some useful suggestion in regard to an alteration had been made to you during the afternoon, and you were in feverish haste to carry it out before the van came in the morning to fetch the picture away.

The studio always seemed terribly empty for the next few days after the pictures had gone, they had almost got to be part and parcel of the furniture, and there seemed to be no excuse for starting on another canvas at once, so one would often have a bit of a holiday in the shape of a saunter round the neighbourhood, smoking one's pipe and looking up one's friends, which was rather a fascinating way of passing a fine spring morning, when St John's Wood was looking its very best.

One was full of hope for one's pictures during the first week of sending them in, for you had had so many compliments paid you.

Then came the inevitable reaction, and gradually you worked yourself into a state of nervous tension waiting for the result, and every postman's knock sent a thrill through you, till at last your whole future career and welfare seemed to be absolutely dependent on the decision of the Hanging Committee at the Royal Academy. It seems very puerile when one looks back on it all through the mist of time.

That year I was having my first shot at getting "hung," and a very big and ambitious shot too. I had sent in the large 10-feet canvas I had painted in the Scilly Islands, as Leighton had come up to the studio to see it and had given me encouragement for risking it, by expressing the opinion that "it stood a chance." But although he was *ipso facto* always on the Hanging Committee, his friendship for one was not of much avail, the President only exercising the casting vote when necessary.

Well! my lucky star was not in the ascendant that year so far as the Academy was concerned, for my great work was not hung "for want of space," and I felt very dejected about it, and thought the world was coming to an end in consequence. I went and saw Leighton, and he was very sympathetic, but I fancy he was surprised that I should take it so much to heart, for I was so young then! He

said he had put in a good word for it, but its size was against it, and advised me to try it again the following year, since it had not been actually rejected. But to me it was a distinction without a difference, and I was in no mood to think of resuming painting yet awhile, and so depressed was I by this temporary set-back, that I brooded over it to such an extent that I actually had serious thought of throwing up art and enlisting, and went and had a chat with a recruiting sergeant with a view to joining a cavalry regiment.

It was at this time I first realised what a comfort it was to have a girl pal. I was somehow on a different footing with the *petites amies* I had had when living in Paris, for the reason, perhaps, that I was not then working for my living, and had a little income coming in regularly, so there was nothing to worry about. Here in London all was changed, and it was a pretty serious matter if I could not make things go right every time; at least, so I thought, for to employ an Irishism, everything seemed to appear black when I was in one of my blue moods, and this is where the female element came in as against the masculine. Men friends, as I have always found, must generally have some sort of compensating self-satisfaction for their sympathy and help, however much they are with you in your trouble. There generally crop up time-worn platitudes which often help to undo the good feeling. "If you had only taken my advice," they will probably ejaculate, or, "I am very sorry for you, old man, but I warned you what would happen," and so forth. Little nothings, perhaps, but the fly in the ointment, all the same.

Curiously enough, in Bohemia, if a woman of the right sort is really fond of a man, there is none of this; there is nothing to temper her sympathy with him when trouble comes. Anyhow, that has been my experience, as doubtless it is that of many other

"THE VERY EMBODIMENT OF ALL THAT WAS SWEET AND HUMAN AND SENSIBLE ——"

men. In studio life one realises this perhaps more than elsewhere, for in spite of the apparent light-heartedness and absence of family cares, the bachelor artist Bohemian often lives a wretchedly isolated and solitary existence. Of course, the artistic temperament may have a deal to do with this, but this is no fault of the individual, as will be admitted.

So it happened, fortunately for me as it turned out, that I had a dear little girl friend at the time, and she proved the very embodiment of all that was sweet and human and sensible, when I was in the depths of despair. I have often thought over those days when, had it not been for her, I should have probably done something foolish; and with it all, her affection and her sympathy were absolutely disinterested, for she knew I was not in affluent circumstances; that was the charm of it, and made me appreciate her the more.

It was then that I first realised that in the unconventional life of Bohemia one can find attachments every whit as sincere, and often more so, from what I have seen since, than those which are made binding by the law. However, enough of moralising.

Katie was employed in one of the big shops, so could only see me after she left business. We would then, perhaps, if it was a fine evening, stroll up to Hampstead and wander about the Heath, which we had all to ourselves at that hour; and I could be as miserable as I liked, for I felt she was heart and soul with me, and if I laughed she would laugh, and if I cried she would cry also, so we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

Gradually, as may be imagined, it dawned on me that my life was not ended simply because this beastly picture had not been hung, and I actually found myself after a time coming to the conclusion that perhaps it was all for the best, because it must have been a poor work after all, and wouldn't have done me any good even if it had been hung, and my

little friend agreed with me in this, as, in fact, she would have done in anything I might have advanced.

And it came about that one morning I woke up with the feeling that the clouds had lifted and that I had to pull myself together, so I went down to the *Illustrated* and was lucky enough to catch Mr Ingram in. He seemed pleased to see me, and I sold him a drawing, and as I came out into the Strand things seemed to me to look different and brighter. Although it had commenced to rain, and I hadn't got an umbrella, somehow I didn't mind if I did get wet, and I met a friend and he asked me to go into Short's, where we had a couple of glasses of port, and—well! that was the last of my attack of the blues.

What a jolly evening Katie and I spent together; I sent her a wire, I remember, and we went to a little Italian restaurant just off the Edgware Road, and had quite a feast on the strength of my good luck at the office.

It may be of interest to mention here that the picture which had caused me so much heartburning was eventually purchased for the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, where it now hangs.

I had taken the studio at No. 10 on a three years' agreement and my time was nearly up, so I started looking around, as I wanted something more convenient in the way of accommodation, when Katie, who had been out of sorts for some time and not at all strong, was taken ill and had to give up business and go home to her people in Somersetshire. There was to me a certain mystery as to the nature of her ailment, so when she came to see me to say good-bye the morning she left, I plied her with questions, when at last she burst into tears and I elicited the truth. The doctor had told her that one of her lungs was affected—her father, it appeared, had died of consumption—and that she must get away at once from the crowded workroom and

"— THE PICTURE WHICH HAD CAUSED ME SO MUCH HEARTBURNING WAS EVENTUALLY PURCHASED FOR THE WALKER ART GALLERY, LIVERPOOL."

vitiated atmosphere and go to live in the open air as much as possible, which meant, of course, she must not come back to London for a long, long time. "Very hard luck, isn't it?" she added plaintively. I need scarcely say how affected I was. The sadness of it all struck me as being too terrible, for she was so young and so full of the *joie de vivre*, but I did my best to disguise my feelings and cheer her up. "If every one believed what the doctor said, we should be dead long ago," I told her, with an attempt at hilarity I little felt. It was "only a slight cold" on her chest she had got, and a few days in the country would no doubt put her right—"right as rain," and so forth, but I'm afraid my voice belied my words. However, she tried bravely to curb her tears and said that she had made up her mind to do exactly what the doctor said she had to, and take all the nasty medicine he ordered, and then she would get well very quickly and come back to London, and we should be ever so happy together once more. Poor little Katie, I never saw her again.

Her sister called on me some time afterwards and told me that from the first it was more serious than the doctor had said, how she had wasted away and gradually got weaker and weaker until she was a mere shadow of her old self, and then the end came —mercifully, no doubt. They say that "those that the gods love die young," but this is but poor consolation to those who mourn their loss.

CHAPTER XII

My first campaign for the *Illustrated London News*—The Bechuanaland expedition—Its origin—I see Mr Ingram and offer to go out for the *News*—He agrees—First impressions as an accredited representative of a Paper—Interview with Colonel the Hon. Paul Methuen—The 1st Mounted Rifles, "Methuen's Horse"—The recruiting office—A bit of a set-back—Sir Charles Warren and newspapers correspondents—Suggestion that I join "Methuen's"—In dual capacity as artist and soldier—Mr Ingram agrees—I pass medical examination—Sign on as trooper—Serious reflections—Enthusiasm prevails—getting ready to leave England for a year—The departure of the *Pembroke Castle* for South Africa—Composition of the regiment and pay of troopers.

I HAVE always been a firm believer in the truth of the old French adage *Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre*, and in remarkably few instances have I found my confidence in it shaken.

My perseverance in going down so often to the *Illustrated London News* office on the off-chance of a travelling commission coming my way was at last to be rewarded, and at the end of the following year I left London for South Africa on my first expedition for the paper as War-Artist Correspondent with the Bechuanaland Field Force, and trooper in the 1st Mounted Rifles, otherwise known as "Methuen's Horse." The combination of War Correspondent and trooper was so uncommon, and the whole of the circumstances leading up to it so unusual, that I feel it may be perhaps of interest to give a short account of how it came about. Trouble had been brewing for some months in South Africa, a considerable body of Boer freebooters had entered the Bechuanaland Protectorate, forcibly annexed a large

tract of territory, murdered the British representative, and actually proclaimed two new Boer states which they had named Stellaland and Goshen. Such a flagrant defiance of the Convention could not be tolerated, so it was decided to drive them out by force—hence the Bechuanaland Expedition, which was under the command of Sir Charles Warren.

Now was my opportunity. Melton Prior was in the Sudan, not expected back for a long while, and there was no one else at hand, so down I went to the office and offered to go out with the expedition if they would commission me. Mr Ingram liked the idea, and told me to go and find out all about it and let him know what arrangements could be made. I remember I left the office in such a state of elation that I felt as if walking on air.

One must have represented a Paper to realise the feeling of importance one's first big travelling commission conveys. As a matter of fact, I don't think one ever loses this impression. It is, I suppose, in a meaure a sense of gratification at the confidence one feels is reposed in one.

I walked along the Strand pondering what was the next step to take. Mr Ingram had made no suggestions, assuming, presumably, that a man offering his services as War Correspondent did not require his editor to tell him what to do. I realised at once that one was entirely dependent upon one's own initiative when acting as the representative of a newspaper. I was cogitating whether the proper course was to present myself at the War Office and make enquiries, when an idea suddenly flashed in my mind.

It had been announced that in addition to the troops to be used, there was to be a strong force of mounted infantry, and an irregular cavalry regiment was to be raised in England for service in South Africa. A call had been made for volunteers who were good riders and good shots. The regiment was to be

under the command of Colonel The Hon. Paul Methuen. I recollected that there had been a notice in the *Daily Telegraph* that morning, in which it gave particulars where to apply for all information. So to buy the paper and then to make my way to 50 Leicester Square, where was the Recruiting Office, did not take long.

I remember that it was with a certain amount of perhaps pardonable self-confidence I made my way upstairs through the crowd of men waiting to present themselves, and sent in my name to Captain Harell, who was the recruiting officer.

It was the first time I had authority to state that I represented the *Illustrated London News*, and I then at once realised what an "open sesame" this meant, for I was ushered in immediately, and on explaining my business, the Captain said he would take me in to Colonel Methuen, who alone could deal with the matter. I was taken in to an inner room, where the Hon. Paul Methuen received me with much cordiality, but on explaining the object of my call, he informed me without hesitation that he much regretted he could do nothing for me.

It appeared that Sir Charles Warren had given it distinctly to be understood before he left England that he would have no "travelling gentlemen," as he humorously termed War Correspondents, with him on this expedition.

In vain did I urge that an artist could scarcely come under this category, the colonel shrugged his shoulders and replied: "Those are my instructions, and I must carry them out."

I was naturally very disappointed, and I must have shown it; however, there was nothing for it but to give up the idea of going, and I was leaving the room, when Colonel Methuen stopped me, and asked somewhat abruptly, as though an idea had occurred to him: "Are you in the volunteers?" I told him I was a corporal in the "Artists'" Corps. "Are you

a good rider?" "Yes," I replied, wondering what on earth he was driving at. "A good shot with the rifle?" "Fairly," I answered, still more perplexed. "Well, then," he continued, "the best thing you can do is to join my regiment and come out with me as a trooper, and I will use my influence so that you will be able to go about, see, and sketch everything, and at the same time you will no doubt find your military experiences extremely interesting. Besides which," he added, with a laugh, and as an extra inducement, "you will get a medal when it is all over—if you are not killed."

The suggestion was a tempting one to me, but it was so unexpected that I naturally hesitated; moreover, it quite altered my programme, so I replied that I thought I had better go and see Mr Ingram and ask what he thought of it first. "Well, you'll have to decide quickly, because we're nearly full up," he told me. I said I would be back during the afternoon, and hurried off.

I felt I must have a few minutes to myself quietly to think it over, so went into the Square, lit my pipe, and had a walk round and turned it over carefully in my mind. Whilst thus cogitating, I recollected how one of my old schoolfellows, Walter Sullivan, had enlisted in South Africa under somewhat similar circumstances, and had gone through a recent campaign, and how this had fired my imagination at the time.

Now was my opportunity, and before I had smoked my pipe out, I had come to the conclusion to try and take advantage of it. Moreover, my time was up at the studio and I had absolutely not a tie in the world. No one could have been freer than I was just then, so I decided, therefore, to join if Mr Ingram approved of it.

Without further hesitation I jumped into a cab and was fortunate in catching him still at the office. Although somewhat surprised, he thought Colonel

Methuen's suggestion a capital one, and in a few moments it was all settled that I should go, and I received my credentials signed by him. Within an hour I was back again in Leicester Square, passed by the doctor, entered as a trooper in "D Troop" of "Methuen's Horse" for one year certain, and informed that I was in the first detachment that was leaving in the *Pembroke Castle* ten days later. Nothing could have been quicker. I had scarcely had breathing time, yet all this had happened since I left home in the morning.

As I made my way back to St John's Wood it gradually dawned on me the seriousness of the step I had taken. What would my people say to it? Probably they would call me an arrant fool, but that did not trouble me, for I was a free agent. I felt there was no going back, anyhow. The die was cast, and I was no longer my own master, but a soldier, and at the call of my commanding officer.

It was indeed a strange transformation, and I must admit that for a short time I felt a pang of regret at my impetuosity. The thought, I remember, flashed through my mind that I was giving up painting, and that all the pleasant times of my studio life and so forth were at an end for many months—perhaps for ever—for I might get bowled over and never come back. My heart beat wildly for a moment at the thought. But I was young and enthusiastic, the love of adventure, so characteristic a trait of my temperament, asserted itself, and I soon recovered my equanimity, for there was no time to lose, only ten days to make all my preparations for leaving England, giving up my studio, storing my furniture, etc., getting my kit together, and the hundred and one things that my long absence would necessitate.

The next week was spent in feverish preparation, and I was at length glad when the time approached for my departure. The excitement of it all was so wearying.

At last the eventful day arrived, and on a typically gloomy November day I left for South Africa with the first detachment of the "1st Mounted Rifles."

It may be of interest to add that of the unique regiment raised by Colonel Methuen for the Expedition, two hundred were gentlemen volunteers who had served in the Militia, and who had competed for, and failed to obtain, commissions in the regular Army. Another three hundred were selected from the Volunteer Force, and from gentlemen who had unsuccessfully competed for admission to the Military College, Sandhurst, and about one hundred men of the Army Reserve. The pay for troopers was 4s. per day, with 1s. deferred pay—the horses and accoutrements being found by the Government.

My experiences whilst serving as a trooper in Bechuanaland, interesting as they were, can scarcely be considered as coming within the scope of a narrative of "One's Bohemian Days in London," so the year I was away must therefore form a hiatus in my life of that time. Suffice it to add that I was fortunate in going through the campaign without any serious mishap, and returned to England the following year all the better physically for my strenuous life out on the veldt.

CHAPTER XIII

I return to England from South Africa—The call of the wild—Finding a new studio—3 Blenheim Place—My cousin Harris—A sporting arrangement—Alone once more—The female element again—A pleasant adventure—My new friend—I restart painting—The demure Gaiety girl and the diaphanous drapery—Painting from the nude—Bad times—Living on the cheap—Sententious platitudes—The artists' money-lender—Cycling in those days—The Army Cycling Corps—Our tricycle—Cycling Club costume—The "Spider," the "Kangaroo"—Ludicrous adventure—The new dollar piece—Cycling in France—Le Portel—The "Grosvenor" and Sir Coutts Lindsay—"Varnishing Day" at the Royal Academy—The "Private View"—London Hosts and Hostesses—Lady Seton—Social life—Card parties—Funny experience—Result of a foraging expedition—"When the moon," etc., curious sequel to the sale of a picture—Keeley Halswelle and the Sketching Club.

I FELT very much like a fish out of water for some time after my return to England, and I was almost wondering if I should ever be able to settle down again to the quiet humdrum I had been leading before I went away.

When one has got accustomed to the free-and-easy camp life of the veldt, and the days spent in the saddle, with no cares or worries to trouble one, it may be imagined how difficult it is to return to the cramped quarters of a London studio.

Although I had often been longing when out in South Africa for the day to come when I should find myself back in London, the recollection of the adventurous existence I had been living for the past year kept continually recurring to my memory, and at times I found myself wishing it would all come over again. Those dreary wastes, which had so

"LEILY."

depressed one when wearily trekking across them, would now appear to my mind's eye, as I recalled them, as a sort of boundless parkland, and I would have given anything to be across a horse again galloping towards the distant horizon of blue hills.

The call of the wild had got hold of me, and has held me ever since. Settle down as I may, I still feel that indescribable yearning at times for the solitude of the plains.

St John's Wood seemed strangely small now, and every one I met appeared to me as though suffering from lack of fresh air, and I almost felt sorry for them having had to stay at home, as it were, midst bricks and mortar, whilst I had been seeing the world. However, my wanderings were over for the time, so it now meant my finding a new studio. I wished to remain in the old neighbourhood, as I had got accustomed to it, and had many friends round about.

After only a few days' search, I came across a place that suited me admirably at No. 3 Blenheim Place, quite close, therefore, to my old one. It was part of a double house, immediately facing the "Eyre Arms," with an entrance to itself, two rooms on the street level, and a large room on the first floor, which the landlord agreed to convert into a studio by putting in a large top light. The house itself was also "To Let," and a cousin of mine "Leily" Harris, a very jolly fellow, with whom I was on a footing of the greatest friendship, decided to take it, so we started, as it were, *en ménage* together. The house, I may mention, communicated with the studio through the back garden, which was of quite appreciable dimensions. This garden gave a sort of comparative isolation to us both, which was very useful, seeing we were bachelors. We therefore never attempted to intrude on each other's privacy. If the back doors were closed it was understood we were "engaged." This sporting

arrangement answered admirably, for "Leily" was "one of the best," and during the several years we lived together there was never a hitch or a wry word of any sort between us.

It was with a peculiar sort of feeling of commencing all over again that I arranged my furniture in the studio, and unpacked my belongings. So much had happened to me since I had last seen them all a year ago, that it seemed almost strange to sit in front of a canvas and make a start at a picture, whilst particularly there was a sense of freedom which was almost impressive after my year of military subordination.

Although I had made no fortune by my work in South Africa, I had come back with sufficient money to enable me if I so wished to devote all my time during the next few months to painting only. I had been looking forward to this moment with a joyous expectancy which the long period of "roughing it" had accentuated.

I recall how particularly delightful it was to be alone once more in a place of my own, for what had been to me the most trying part of my soldier life was the entire absence at any time of privacy, the constant and unavoidable association with companions who were not invariably congenial. Though one made good and lasting chums amongst one's comrades, there were many unpleasant characters you would have gladly got away from, could it have been managed. It was this promiscuous association rather than the actual soldiering that made one so glad to get away from it. Apart, however, from this feeling of liberty that I now enjoyed, there was the knowledge that the female element would once more become an integrant part of one's life, for whilst it is common knowledge that Venus and Mars have often united, such a combination is hardly possible when on "active service." Therefore for the past twelve months practically I had been willy-nilly

living the life of an ascetic, which, as a Bohemian of the Paris school, I feel constrained to confess is not at all in my line.

Somewhat curiously I had a very pleasant adventure on the very night of my return to England. I had put up at lodgings I already knew of in St Ann's Terrace, and she happened to live within a few yards of me. I cannot quite exactly remember how we became acquainted; but if I remember rightly she was going to post a letter. I was finishing a pipe before going into bed. It was one of those *rencontres du hasard* which frequently, and strangely enough, lead to lasting friendship, and so it turned out in this instance. One would scarcely have expected to make the acquaintance of a charming woman in a St John's Wood street at 11.30 at night. One would be apt to be somewhat sceptical when she told you she was not what you took her for, especially when the acquaintanceship was made in so unorthodox a manner. But I was in a particularly happy state of mind at the time, and when she told me she was a governess with a family in the neighbourhood, instead of smiling to myself at the old, old story as I should probably have thought it otherwise, I believed her at once, and not only did it turn out to be quite true, but we eventually became the closest of friends, and she sat to me quite a number of times. I may here mention a curious and interesting fact that some of my most successful and popular pictures were painted from "friends" I had met under similarly casual circumstances.

The fact of my only having just got back from a long campaign seemed to interest her, and we strolled round the quiet neighbourhood until long after the hour when respectable folk are supposed to be in bed. There was a fascination to me in being once more with a delightful woman after months of rough camp life, that made me feel still more elated at having got through my twelve months' experience

of soldiering safely and being back again, free to continue my own bent once more.

It may be imagined with what eagerness I was looking forward to an early renewal of the pleasant times my studio life had hitherto procured me. It took some few days after I had moved in to get into the way of the place and to make it ship-shape; and when I had done this, I felt that this was the most delightfully convenient place I had had so far, and as will be seen, it turned out to be the luckiest place also. It may perhaps appear strange that after a year's campaigning when sketching only military subjects, I should on my return to painting at once revert to my old loves—shipping and the sea. But such was the case, and as soon as my studio was ready I made a start on an idea I had had in my mind before I went away. It represented the deck of one of the old Woolwich steamers, and was, of course, a composition with many figures. My newly-found friend, who was really very good-looking, managed to come and sit for me at times, and evinced an intelligent interest in the progress of the picture that conduced not a little to its ultimate success.

I went several times down the river in order to get the local colouring and grouping accurately; whilst for my models, I trusted to chance to find them, since it was necessary to have distinct types in a picture of this description. The average model is too self-conscious and professional, I therefore got any one I happened to come across to sit for me, if they would. One day, for instance, it was a lifeguardsman, on another occasion there was a labouring man with his tool bag, then an old workhouse man I saw passing the studio one Sunday morning. I remember him in particular, because he was quite a curiosity in his way. He couldn't make out what I wanted with him at first; when he realised that I meant him no harm he became as talkative as a child, and was willing to come and sit for me

"THE DECK OF ONE OF THE OLD WOOLWICH STEAMERS."

"THEN AN OLD WORKHOUSE MAN."

"I GOT A FLOWER GIRL TO COME TO THE STUDIO — "

"WAS, AT THE TIME, AT THE 'GAIETY.'"

every day of the year had I wanted him. These sittings were red-letter days for him evidently. Then I got a flower girl to come to the studio. In fact this picture provided a good excuse for having all sorts and conditions of everyday folk to sit for me, and making character studies which were extremely interesting. I eventually exhibited this picture at the Paris *Salon*, and it was sent afterwards to Australia, where it was bought by one of the Art Galleries.

In a comparatively short time, therefore, I quite dropped back into my old groove and found plenty of work to keep me busy, and although it was not highly remunerative, I managed somehow to make a living by it.

It was, however, often highly entertaining as well as interesting to be able to paint exactly what you felt inclined to, and there was a certain compensation even if it didn't bring in a lot of money. I remember one little instance, which is, perhaps, worth relating in this connection. I had been looking out for a type of face I had in my mind for a subject, and I was introduced to a very pretty girl, who was, at the time, at the "Gaiety," and who not only had the face I wanted but apparently the figure also. She willingly agreed to sit for me, but waxed most indignant when she saw the sketch for the picture, as the subject was an "altogether" one, and she expressed herself very emphatically on the indecency of any girl sitting in that state.

I somehow had an idea that she was not so demure as she wished me to think; but I said nothing in reply to her tirade, as I thought there was a chance of getting her to alter her views, and so it turned out. She came and sat for me, and we gradually became friendly, and she got less and less prudish, or, rather, more and more natural, till one afternoon she suggested to me of her own accord that she would don a diaphanous drapery, if it would help me at all. Of course I fell in with her views, and the next time

she came she brought some soft material to drape herself in. "The drapery," which was merely a very thin sort of chiffon, was difficult to keep in place and kept slipping off, until at last there was really no excuse for her continuing to wear it at all as there was nothing further to hide, so I painted her as a nymph after all. It had taken her about a fortnight to alter her views.

Now came the sequel, which was quite curious. Once she had overcome her scruples as to sitting for the nude, she actually seemed to enjoy being about the studio in *puris naturalibus*, and it ended by my often having to persuade her to don her attire when I had finished work. She even went so far, one day, as to express the opinion that "clothes were a nuisance"; and I agreed with her that they were, when they disguised so beautiful a form as hers, but not otherwise.

Perhaps, however, not the least amusing part of of it all was that she brought several girl friends of hers from the theatre to see the picture as it progressed, and one or two of them made no compliments about offering to sit for me also for a similar subject, if ever I wanted some one else with an equally good figure, so I could have had as many amateur models as I wished for on the strength of it.

Painting from the nude, however, was a luxury which one could not always permit oneself, much as one would have liked to be always at it. One had to keep the main chance in view at all times, and that was whether the picture would sell, for buyers of such subjects are few and far between in England.

Outside the studio one managed also to have amusements, for it was seldom you had dull times unless you happened to be hard up, which condition of affairs happened now and again, for one's expenses were seldom commensurate with one's earnings.

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"SO I PAINTED HER AS A NYMPH AFTER ALL."

"ONCE SHE HAD OVERCOME HER SCRUPLES."

From the original drawing in the Collection of M. E. de Rossi.

In looking back on these days, I am forced to the conclusion that one got used to the recurrence of bad times. It is said that eels get used to being skinned; and, I suppose, artists get reconciled to what has always been considered inevitable in the most precarious of the professions.

It is when things are not looking bright that Bohemianism in London is so utterly depressing, whereas in Paris, when one is *dans la dèche*, there are many little places where one can live cheaply and without loss of dignity. In this vast metropolis, if one is on one's "uppers," as it used to be picturesquely called, there are no haunts corresponding with what one could find in the Quartier Latin or Montmatre, where for a few *sous* you could get an ample meal, with a merry crowd of students as hard up as yourself, to keep you company. There were cheap places round about Lisson Grove and Edgware Road; but the mere look of them was sufficient to decide one that a crust of bread and a piece of cheese in the privacy of the studio was preferable to rubbing shoulders with the unwashed loafers and casual labourers who frequented them. Most artists probably have had similar experiences at some time or other, for I fancy that snobbishness is not one of the weaknesses of the profession.

I have often heard it advanced by people who love to air sententious platitudes on subjects they know little about, that the charm of art as against other professions is that an artist need never be hard up, he can always occupy himself even when he has no work on order. He can paint pictures instead of sitting idle. That is so, for, of course, a doctor cannot make cases any more than a solicitor would occupy his spare time, whilst waiting for clients, writing legal documents on spec. But whilst it is easy to manufacture pictures, they necessitate actual disbursement from the time one gets one's canvas till the frame is ordered, and then there

is no certainty of effecting a sale and getting back one's outlay.

The speculative character of making a living by art is generally overlooked when it is considered sufficiently compensated for by the pleasurable and comparatively easy nature of the work.

In the days of which I am writing there was a nice, kind, old gentleman, who conceived the quixotic idea of lending money to artists on their pictures or prospective work. You had to be introduced to him through a client, and if he had confidence in you or your talent he would generously help you out of your temporary embarrassment for a certain consideration, and many a lame dog did he help over the stile. He was the only one, I think, in London who would advance cash to artists on note of hand. He could scarcely have been considered a money-lender in the accepted sense of the term, for, although, the interest he charged often worked out at a very high rate, the risks he took were generally quite out of proportion to the security he was given, and his office was always full of pictures on which he had advanced money which he had little chance of ever getting back. Still it was evidently a profitable business, or he would not have carried it on, I suppose.

I got introduced to him, of course, as indeed did most of us, for it was often very useful if you wanted to go away suddenly to be able to discount an account owing to you. He got to know his clients, and was never hard on those who kept their word with him, and I was almost sorry to learn that when he died he left quite a collection of unsaleable pictures, which, of course, represented errors of judgment, but I believe he left quite a respectable fortune also. In these days of depreciation of modern art such a business could not exist, for the average artist has no security to offer so far as his paintings are concerned, I fancy.

But let us revert to the lighter side of artistic Bohemianism which, after all, makes more interesting reading. The eternal feminine never monopolised the same attention in London artistic life as it did in the Quartier in Paris, where it is part and parcel of the life of the student, and although many of us, especially those who had studied abroad, had acquired a continental proclivity for always being on the look-out for pretty girls, we generally made our recreations coincide with British ideas.

These recreations at this time took the form of bicycling, which was then in a state of transition. It makes me smile when I recall what grotesque looking objects could be seen about at that time. Quadricycles, tricycles, in all shapes and sizes, every one of which claimed to be more efficacious than the rest, some with huge wheels, others with small ones.

The Army had just began to adopt them, and a cycling corps established, which had some machines constructed to carry as many as eight men. Eccentricity was the prevailing feature in all makes.

I recollect a tricycle a friend and I used to ride, which had two large wheels on either side and a very small one at the back, and there were two sets of pedals which we both worked. I sat on a little seat in front, and my friend behind was responsible for the steering and the brake, and if he stopped the machine too suddenly, I was shot out of my seat like from a catapult, and would find myself sitting in the road. The tyres were, of course, solid, as pneumatics were not invented then, and one was always having trouble with them as they were fixed on the rim of the wheel with a sort of glue.

The most ludicrous results would often ensue if, as would often happen, the rubber got warped or stretched or the glue would not hold. On one

occasion I remember we had to tear up a handkerchief into strips to tie the tyre on, with an effect that may be imagined—and we rode the whole day in this quaint fashion.

Not the least curious feature of cycling in those days was the peculiar fact that most of the cycling clubs would adopt uniforms of weird designs. My cousin Harris, who rode a high machine, I remember, belonged to a club in which all the members were dressed in a sort of compromise between a military officer and a foreign postman, with black, short, heavily-braided tunic, tight-fitting knee-breeches, stockings and shoes, and a peak cap. Yet he fancied himself no end in this motley garb. In my particular set we were not so fastidious as to our get-up, in fact rather the other way about, and often looked veritable tramps on wheels in our scratch costumes.

The "Spider" with its immense front wheel and little tiny back one was being gradually ousted by the small "Safety" or "Kangaroo"—a most grotesque looking object, something like a miniature tall machine, and which was the forerunner of the present bicycle. It was driven by a horizontal chain. Every one was going mad on them, and I, together with several of my friends, succumbed to the craze as they were far lighter than the tricycle, and many a pleasant week-end in the country did we have. We would set off with only the bare necessities in the shape of luggage and a parcel attached to the handle-bars, and make for the Coast.

How peaceful the country roads were in those pre-motor days, when almost one's only risk was getting run in by the police if you were caught "scorching," *i.e.*, going at a "furious pace," which, of course, could scarcely mean more than twelve miles an hour! It seems almost inconceivable that so great a change could have come over the country in twenty-five years only.

What would hardly be considered as incidents

nowadays were looked upon as "adventures" then. This was easily understood, as one seldom went any distance without a breakdown of some sort, for the machines were faultily constructed. If this happened at a distance from a town or village it usually meant a long and wearisome walk whilst trundling one's crippled machine, and not infrequently losing one's way into the bargain. I remember a ludicrous incident on one occasion of which I was the cause.

A party of five of us had started for a trip to the East Coast one hot, summer day, intending to put up for the first night at a little place named Goldhanger. We had not got many miles from London when my "Kangaroo" began to give me trouble. In vain did we pull up and overhaul it, the trouble continued, until we had at last to stop, and the mechanical genius of our party took the chain off and eased it, and tried by every means to get the beastly thing to work properly—but to no purpose—so there was no help for it but to get along as well as I could and endeavour to reach our destination somehow. But the chain would not work, and I could scarcely get the wheels to move.

Night came on and we were hardly making any progress; I was gradually becoming exhausted. At last the chain became completely jammed and I could go no further, whilst to make matters worse, we had not the slightest idea where we were, and it was pitch dark. We found ourselves on an apparently new bridge over a railroad, the roadway was of soft rubble, so I placed my bicycle against the parapet and literally dropped with fatigue on the ground alongside it.

My friends realised that there was nothing for it but to keep me company, and decided that the best thing to do was to remain where we were until daybreak, before attempting to find out where we were. There was no help for it. We should

have to go without supper and bed, so they made themselves as comfortable as possible on the soft ground. It was an unpleasant ending to the excursion, and we were all too annoyed to speak much. Our only consolation was that it was a beautifully warm night. Quarter of an hour or so passed, and we were dozing off when a church clock chimed out quite close by — only a short distance away. Up we jumped and went across the bridge towards it, when to our utter amazement we found we were actually in a village, and not a hundred yards from an old-fashioned, comfortable looking inn.

All was in darkness, for it was late, but it did not take long to arouse the landlord, and soon we were all ensconced in a cosy parlour with the pleasant prospect of supper and bed. It was, indeed, an instance of "All's well that ends well," and, as may be imagined, we laughed heartily over the curious adventure.

The adventures of our cycling days would indeed almost make up a volume for themselves. In fact, when one started on a tour, it was almost with the idea of seeking them, for it was very delightful exploring wild parts of the country, and discovering, as it were, out-of-the-world villages.

I recall one little incident which will convey some idea of the primitive conditions which still prevailed in outlying districts and within comparatively easy distance of London. It was shortly after the new coinage had been introduced. I forget where we were going, but anyhow we stopped to lunch at a wayside inn on a big road some fifty miles from town.

On finishing our humble meal of bread and cheese, and pickles and shandygaff, one of the party who was paymaster tendered a brand new 4s. piece to the landlady, in payment. I well remember the look of indignation on her face. Holding it in

"HUNG IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY THE FOLLOWING YEAR."

the palm of her outstretched hand she exclaimed coarsely, "What are you trying on? 'Ere, wot's this?" Our friend told her that it was one of the new dollar pieces; but she wouldn't listen to him. "Don't you come any of your larks on me," she vociferated contemptuously. "I want paying for what I sell; I don't want medals!" Of course it was no use arguing with her, so paid she had to be in coin of the realm she recognised.

The advent of the motor has done away with all the rural simplicity that then existed. Of course one's sketching materials were always indispensable adjuncts on these tours, for you could never tell when you would come across something that would tempt you to stop and work.

I went over to France one summer with a particular pal, and whilst riding round on our bicycles, we lighted on a delightfully quaint little fishing village named Le Portel, near Boulogne, a perfect Paradise for artists. We were so smitten with it that we remained there for weeks, and I painted several pictures in the open, so quiet was it, and returned there on several successive years.

The quondam fishing village has now developed into quite a smart little *bourgeois plage*, and has long been abandoned by artists.

Two of the pictures which I painted in Le Portel were hung in the Royal Academy the following year. This was the first time I had exhibited there, so I was very pleased, especially as one of them was six feet long. They were very well placed, one being "on the line," and, what was of still more importance to me, for, after all, I was out for the shekels, was that I sold them both, one of my purchasers being Arthur Collins, at that time stage manager to Sir Augustus Harris at Drury Lane, then and ever since a good pal of mine, but whom I had not hitherto suspected of being a patron of Art. That particular bicycle tour brought me luck,

as another picture I had painted at the same time was "on the line" at the Grosvenor Gallery, and was also sold.

At that time the "Grosvenor" was a very serious rival to the Academy, and many of the best known men exhibited there in preference to Burlington House, as the galleries were very spacious, and the pictures not crowded together. It was run by Sir Coutts Lindsay, and his idea was to encourage painters who showed an inclination to break away from the hide-bound traditions of mid-Victorian Art—and one exhibited by invitations from him only.

For many years the Grosvenor Gallery Summer Exhibition was looked upon as of almost equal importance to that at the Royal Academy, and to be invited to exhibit there was a compliment eagerly sought after. During the exhibition, which was held in the height of the London season, Sir Coutts would give evening receptions which were chiefly remarkable, I recollect, for the weird artistic attire and plainness of the ladies present, whilst another feature was the invariable notice that met your eyes — "*Chablis* and oysters downstairs." "Downstairs," therefore, was usually the most crowded part of the reception. The strawberries and cream of the ordinary Royal Academy receptions paled into insignificance against Sir Coutts' hospitality.

"Varnishing Day" at the Academy was then, as it is now, a very tame affair compared with the "Vernissage" at the Paris *Salon*, which, as is well known, is practically the Private View as well, and one of the fashionable events of the year. In London the galleries at Burlington House on that day are entirely given up to the exhibitors, who are even at liberty to work on their pictures if they choose, and it is a very solemn and uninteresting scene as compared with that on the other side of the Channel.

The English artist is not a particularly cheerful individual as a rule, and on this occasion he generally seems too much wrapped up in himself to be very communicative. Even if one's picture is well placed, I know of few occasions more depressing than "Varnishing Day" at the Royal Academy.

"Private View," to which the mere artists who have only painted the pictures, are never invited, is a purely social function, for which it is very difficult to get a card unless one happens to be a friend of an Academician, in the Smart Set, or a *nouveau riche*; it does not therefore in any sense come within the range of Bohemianism. I say this advisedly, because I feel sure that it will be admitted that true Bohemianism and Smart Society cannot under any conceivable conditions go frankly hand in hand in London, far less indeed than in Paris, whilst the English *bourgeois* who has made a bit of money is often a terrible snob, and frequently more royalist than the King — the women folk especially so. I had not lived long in England on my return from France when I noticed this, and I have never seen reason to alter my opinion.

Outward appearance and the style one lives in count for so much in London. The time-worn joke, "It is not what you are but what you wear," has indeed exceptional significance here, except in a certain very proscribed set—nowadays perhaps even more so than in the time of which I am writing. It was therefore, perhaps, all for the good of the artists that they did not receive invitations to the private view at the Royal Academy. They would have probably felt very out of it, even though in it.

There were, however, several London hosts and hostesses who, without being in any sense Bohemian, yet took pleasure in having around them an artistic *coterie*, and at their receptions one met most of the young, rising celebrities of the day. Sir Bruce and

Lady Seton, for instance, were always "At home" on Sunday afternoons at Durham House, their delightful place in Chelsea. And one was certain to find there a distinguished and interesting crowd of people who had most of them accomplished something, or thought they had. As a friend of mine whom I used to meet there said to me once, it was somewhat disconcerting at times to be amongst such a lot of distinguished and clever people, and he always felt nervous about "opening his mouth in case he put his foot into it." It really wasn't quite so bad as all that, all the same, and Lady Seton was as witty as she was gracious.

Of course, this social life was a great contrast to one's unconventional studio existence, but it did one no harm to now and again get into a black coat and put on a top hat to pay visits on a Sunday afternoon. It made you feel quite a respectable member of society, even if you did have your best girl waiting for you at the corner of the next street when you came out.

On Saturday evening during the winter months, we usually fixed up a mild game of poker, and went to different friends' houses in turn. We only played for small stakes, and there was not much damage done, but it often meant a long sitting, though that didn't matter much, as Sunday was always a day off, and unless you had some particular work to get finished by Monday morning, you never got up early. Mentioning this reminds me of a rather funny experience.

One Sunday I had been spending the evening with some friends when I suddenly recollected I had a drawing to get finished by nine o'clock the following morning, when they were sending from the office for it. It was already late, so there was no time to lose. I jumped up and made excuses for having to run away by explaining the reason.

My host, a very good-natured fellow, wouldn't

hear of my leaving until I had had supper. I could go away as soon as I wished afterwards. In vain did I protest that I must be off at once, otherwise the drawing would not be ready in time, and, as it was, I should have to sit up nearly all night to get it done. He would not hear of it. Then, as a last resort, I told him that supper always made me sleepy, and I hoped he would not insist on my having it. "I know the very thing to keep you awake," he replied heartily, "a bit of cold pheasant and salad, a small bottle of 'The Boy,' something extra dry, and then a cup of strong black coffee and a liqueur of old brandy; you will work like a Trojan, and thank me for my advice—you see if you don't."

His genial hospitality was absolutely irresistible, and after a little further feeble resistance, during which I became weaker and weaker, I succumbed, and had a supper that I enjoyed immensely. Well, I got back to the studio, smoking a big cigar, and, sitting down in front of my drawing, started work.

The next thing I remember was a startled exclamation from the charwoman: "Lor, sir, you gave me quite a turn, seein' you sittin' there when I came in." It was eight o'clock, and I had been fast asleep all night. The drawing was not ready by nine o'clock, and since then I have not been a believer in supper, even if followed by black coffee and old brandy, for keeping one awake, when one has work to do.

But to revert to our Saturday night poker parties. I remember on one occasion we were playing at a friend's house till well on into the small hours of the Sunday morning. Our host's wife had provided a lot of sandwiches and bread and cheese—a sort of scratch supper which we had disposed of before midnight. At 3 o'clock we were ravenous, and as we did not feel inclined to break up the party yet, our host said that perhaps we might find something to appease our hunger in the kitchen, but added that he

did not know his way about downstairs, and, of course, all the servants were in bed long ago.

So down we all trooped on a foraging expedition, and to our joy we discovered in the larder some sausages and bacon and bread and butter, so with plates and knives and the frying pan we returned to the room where we were playing cards, cooked a succulent supper on the fire, and made an excellent impromptu meal, then went on with our game and separated about 4.30 A.M.

Our host called on me on Monday morning and told me that he had had an awful shindy with his wife, and the whole household had been furious, as it appeared we had eaten up all the Sunday breakfast!

Taking it all in all, therefore, unless work was slack, one managed to put in a very pleasant time, for our tastes were not extravagant, and the temptation to go down "West" of a night was not as it is now. To be able to afford a nice outing in the summer was the sum total of the ambition of most of us, I believe, and if one were lucky enough to sell a picture he had painted whilst away, the holiday appeared to have been still more delightful, and it often meant a jaunt somewhere at Christmas as well.

I recollect one autumn I exhibited at the Society of British Artists a picture I painted during my summer outing. It was very well placed, and judging from the press notices attracted some attention. There would have been nothing worth mentioning about it had it not been for a somewhat curious sequel. Towards the end of the exhibition I received a letter from a distinguished baronet totally unknown to me, saying that he had taken a great fancy to the picture, and would like to present it to his wife on the anniversary of their wedding day. He went on to say he disliked bargaining with an artist, but the price I was ask-

ing for it—£125—was more than he could afford at the moment; would I accept £100?

As it was getting near Christmas, and it meant having a good time in Paris, I accepted his offer, and in due course a cheque reached me.

Now comes the funny part of an otherwise commonplace transaction. After the picture had been delivered, I received a very effusive note from Lady ——, saying how delighted she was with the picture, that she had always been a great admirer of my "work generally" and of "When the Moon is Up, yet it is not Night" in particular. Delighted as I was to receive this flattering letter, there was, I must admit, a fly in the ointment. I had never painted a picture entitled "When the Moon is Up," etc. Romantic though I naturally am, I regret my fancy had never attained such heights. However, after the most earnest deliberation I decided that I had no moral right to shatter the good lady's illusion, so in my very polite reply, whilst thanking her for her kind opinion of my work, I avoided all reference to her favourite picture.

The following day she wrote again, this time asking if she might visit my studio with her sister, who was also a great admirer of "When the Moon," etc. I had no alternative but to fix a day, in fear and trembling, but, to my inexpressible relief, at the last moment I received a wire postponing her call. Although many moons have arisen since then, I have heard nothing further of Lady ——.

During the summer months we would often make short sketching excursions into the country not far from London, and there were several Sketch Clubs formed solely for this purpose by different groups of men. It was more often than not merely a good excuse for a pleasant afternoon's outing, as the jaunts always ended up with a little dinner at some local hostelry.

I recall a laughable story in connection with one

of these excursions. The club in question consisted of a very select coterie of distinguished landscape painters, amongst them being Keely Halswelle, whose pictures, it will be remembered, were remarkable for their delightful sky effects, dappled grey clouds especially. On this particular chance, the party had gone to Goring-on-Thames. It was a blazing hot afternoon in midsummer, and on reaching their destination the friends separated, as was their wont, arranging to meet for dinner in the evening at a certain well-known inn.

It was the custom of the club to hold a sort of impromptu exhibition, before sitting down to dinner, of the sketches done during the afternoon. Well, on this occasion, when they met as arranged, Keely Halswelle was somewhat late in putting in an appearance. In the meantime every one was talking about the intense glare of the sun and the heat, which had been terrific all day.

The sketches were arranged round the room, and were being criticised and admired when Halswelle came in with his canvas, which represented a beautiful reach of the river painted in his inimitable style; but to the amazement of every one it had one of his well-known cloud effects, very artistic of course, but there had not been the sign of a cloud in the sky all the afternoon, so he was asked jokingly to explain the phenomenon. To the astonishment of every one he took it quite seriously, and calmly said that he knew there had been no clouds round about there, but he had taken a boat and gone further up the river.

CHAPTER XIV

Aventures in St John's Wood — A pleasant meeting at Marlborough Road Station—My welcome visitor—Curious incident—A charming friendship—The end of the romance—An unexpected call—Painters idealising their models—"Love's Golden Dream"—My search for an ideal—The stage door of Her Majesty's Theatre—The understudy—I paint the picture—Strange finale—I am introduced to my ideal—The "material" as against the "ideal"—The nun at the fancy dress ball—She comes to the studio—The story of the confessional.

THERE was a good deal of fun to be had in St John's Wood in those days, if you kept your eyes open, but the *aventures* were usually somewhat tame when compared with what one had in Paris, as I have already pointed out. Still, they were often the more delightful because of this, and there was frequently a touch of mystery and romance which gave them additional charm. I don't suppose I was more fortunate than other young men, or that my particular experiences in this respect present any distinct novelty ; but at any rate there were a few exceptional incidents that somehow I have always remembered. One in particular, which I will relate, started in as singular a manner as it eventually ended.

I was standing one afternoon outside Marlboro' Road Station talking to a friend, when an exceptionally pretty and smart girl passed us and went into the booking office. As she did so I caught her eye, and she gave me, as I thought, a glance which sent my impressionable heart into my mouth. My friend noticed it, and remarked jocularly what a lucky fellow I was.

It did not take me an instant to make up my mind. "It's some one I know," I remarked nonchalantly, without heeding his chaff. "I must have a chat with her." Hurrying into the station I joined her as she was taking her ticket. Raising my hat, I held out my hand as though I knew her—she gave a quick look at me, then said, "I am so sorry but I have taken you for some one else. I thought I knew you." "I feel flattered at the mistake," I replied banteringly, "for I feel sure he must be very nice, but it is easily rectified. Every friendship must have a commencement; this is where we start."

She gave a little laugh and said, "Well, I must hurry off, for I have a train to catch at Paddington, and shall miss it if I stop now. Please let me go." "But I must see you again," I replied desperately, for she was ever so much prettier than I had at first thought, and one didn't meet anything like that as a rule by accident. An idea occurred to me. "You have just got the face I want for a picture I'm painting," I said; "do please make an appointment, and let me know where I can write you." I could see she was really on tenterhooks to get away. "No, I can't do that. I live with my people, and they are very strict. We are sure to meet again some day, so good-bye now, I really must go." But I was not to be put off so easily. She was handing her ticket to be clipped, and just about to pass through the barrier; another instant she would have gone. "If I give you my address," I said, "will you come and see me one day? Do, please." My persistence seemed to amuse and interest her. "Well, give me the address of your studio quickly, and I will think it over," she replied. There was no time to lose. I felt in my pocket for an envelope, but I hadn't got one; luckily I had a pencil handy, an unusual thing for an artist, but not a piece of paper to write on. She had a book covered with brown paper under her arm. To seize

it and to scrawl my name and address on it was the work of an instant. A hurried good-bye and she had disappeared.

"You don't lose much time, old man," said my friend, as I rejoined him. He had evidently realised that this was the first occasion on which I had met the lady, and was perhaps a bit annoyed he had let me have it all my own way.

For the next few days her face haunted me; I could not get it out of my mind, and the recollection of our hasty chat. What a delightful girl she was, and what a bit of luck it would be if I ever saw her again, and we should become great friends! I had not the slightest clue as to her name or even where she lived. How stupid of me it was not to have a notebook handy, then I could have got her name and an address to write to. I determined never to go out again without one in my pocket.

In the meantime, for several days I wandered round Marlboro' Road Station of an afternoon, about the time that I had met her, on the off-chance of seeing her again, but to no purpose. One can't bring about accidental meetings. Weeks passed, and time with its usual callousness had gradually obliterated her image, and, as may be imagined, other things gradually occupied my attention, till at last, I must confess, I completely forgot the episode.

One afternoon about tea-time I was alone in the studio when there came a welcome ring at the bell. On opening the door I found that my visitor was a very pretty and smartly-dressed girl. I didn't know her, but her face seemed somewhat familiar to me. A model, I thought. "Is Mr Price in?" she asked. "Yes, he is," I said, without hesitation. "Please walk up into the studio." When we were there I turned round and said, "I am Mr Price. What can I do for you?"

She stared at me for an instant with a perplexed

expression on her face, and asked me in a surprised and aggrieved tone, "Don't you remember me?" I looked at her hard, but was quite at a loss to remember where I had seen her before. "Please forgive me," I replied, "if I appear rude, but I've a memory like a sieve, and it is continually playing me these silly tricks. I shall forget my own name some day! Please tell me where we have met before." "Only fancy your forgetting me, when you said you wanted me to sit for you!" she said, in a surprised tone.

I stood looking at her feeling very uncomfortable, and trying to wake up my memory, but in vain. Although I seemed to know her, I had not the faintest recollection who she was. Then she opened the purse she was carrying and produced a small piece of brown paper, and handed it to me, saying with a laugh, "Perhaps that will remind you." I looked at it, and, to my surprise, I saw written on it my name and address in my own handwriting. Then, with a flash, it all came back to me. This was the girl I had met at Marlboro' Road Station, and been so smitten with a couple of months before, and the piece of paper was from the cover of the book she was carrying that afternoon when I met her. I don't think I have ever felt so lacking in inventive faculty as I did just at the moment; then a happy thought to treat it as a joke came to my rescue, and I burst out laughing at my failure to find a plausible excuse for my lapse of memory. To my relief she entered into the spirit of it, and I was forgiven, so we had tea together with not a ring of the bell to disturb us, and she told me all about herself, and why she had not come to see me before.

She lived at home not very far from London, but too far to get up to town as often as she would like. It was not always easy for her to find an excuse to get away, as her father was an invalid,

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"SHE LOOKED VERY BEAUTIFUL LYING BACK IN A DECK CHAIR ——"

and she had to look after him ; but she had a school friend who lived near Avenue Road, and she came to see her occasionally, so if I really wanted to paint her she would be able to manage to see me now and then. She knew it was very wrong to come to my studio alone, but she was very dull at home, and she loved anything in the way of an adventure ; that was why she had kept my address, as she had never been to a studio before. So she prattled on in an ingenuous style, which was as delightful as it was fascinating, and I felt it was indeed a bit of luck my having been in and alone when she came.

The time slipped away on wings, as it always does when one is young or old. We seemed to have had such a lot to talk about that it had passed unnoticed, so when she suddenly discovered how late it was, I felt as though she had only been with me a few minutes instead of nearly three hours. She had to hurry away, and I went with her to the station, and this time when we parted it was arranged that she should come and see me again during the week, when I could commence the picture.

One of the most charming little friendships I ever made started thus in this unconventional manner, and lasted quite a long time. Though we could only see each other occasionally, I really believe there was as much depth in it as if we had been able to be continually together. Such an *aventure* in Paris would have ended in a *liaison*, with all its sordid worries and quarrels, but here in England it was quite different.

I painted her in quite a large picture—a romantic subject as was only befitting under the circumstances, an officer bringing home his invalid young wife from India. She looked very beautiful lying back in a deck chair with her fair hair against the pillows.

The particular charm of it all was, I remember, the interest she took in the picture from the very

start, and it was due to this that the picture turned out a success, for it was eventually published and became a well-known print at the time.

There is, unfortunately, an ending to all happy times, and sooner or later my rhapsody had to finish—that I realised. My only hope was that it was not to be for a long while, but I could hardly expect to monopolise so sweet and pretty a girl for ever; there must be some sort of *dénouement*. She was aware that I was a confirmed bachelor, for I had felt bound to hint as much at the commencement of our friendship.

The picture finished, there was hardly an excuse for so many visits to the studio, and I could not fail to notice that they were falling off, so at last I made some remark to her about her getting tired of her artist pal. She said that I knew very well that that was not the case, but the truth was her people had been getting suspicious of her object in coming so often to town, and she found it was more and more difficult to find excuses to get away. Then there was an awkward pause. I felt something unlooked for was coming. "Why don't you come down to my home and let me introduce you to father?" she said almost abruptly, as though a sudden thought had struck her.

I was naturally taken back by the proposition, though I guessed immediately what was in her mind. Taking her by the hand I told her as gently as possible that it was better not for both of us, and she understood. The rest of the afternoon was somewhat quiet, as may be imagined. We had tea in the studio as usual, but we both of us felt constrained, and when we parted at the station, I had an intuition that this was the end, and so it turned out! She had made an appointment to come and spend a day with me shortly afterwards, but at the last moment I received a wire—"Sorry, can't get away—will write soon."

I had had the feeling that she would not come, and it was almost word for word what I had expected. I felt a sensation of tightness in my throat as I read it, for we had indeed spent some lovely times together, and I felt I should not easily find another pal like her. I recollect that almost instinctively I turned the easel on which was the picture I painted from her to the wall. The eyes seemed to open and look at me reproachfully!

I heard no more from her until a month or so later, when I received a letter in the familiar writing. My heart leaped into my mouth, for somehow I was delighted to get it. I had been longing that she would write, but its contents gave me a bit of a shock. "I have some big news to tell you," she wrote, "I am engaged to be married. He is much older than I, and I am not sure whether I am in love with him, but my people think it is a very good match for me, so I suppose I shall get used to him in time and settle down to humdrum married life," and she concluded by wishing me all good luck.

There was a touch of sadness pervading it that made me feel a pang of regret.

I sat for some time with the letter in my hand, the events of the last six months racing through my mind, from the day of our first meeting till now, and I could not help thinking how differently it had ended to what it would have been in Paris, and had she been a French girl. It was indeed better as it had turned out, though it had been a bit of a wrench breaking it all off.

Some weeks after I received a little box with a piece of wedding cake and a small envelope with a card in it, printed in silver, to tell me of the wedding.

About six months afterwards, I was working by myself in the studio after lunch, when there was a ring at the bell, and to my intense astonishment

she was at the door. I was so taken aback that I hardly knew what to say. When I recovered my self-possession, I could only ejaculate, "Fancy seeing you again!" "I thought I would take you by surprise," she replied gaily, "and I am so glad to have caught you in. Aren't you pleased to see me?" "Of course I am," I answered, although I felt I was a bit abrupt. Somehow she seemed so different. She was still as pretty as ever, but she was not the same fascinating girl who had sat for me.

I could never have believed that a few months of married life could have altered any one so much! There was a false, light-hearted manner about her, which was not in the least like her old self.

"Are you alone, and may I come in?" she continued. "Yes, certainly," I said, immediately, though I must confess her visit gave me no pleasure. The recollection of a certain extremely unpleasant experience with a married woman, which I have already narrated, flashed through my mind.

"Nothing much changed in the dear old place," she exclaimed, as she dropped into a chair and looked round. "I am so glad to be back in it again and see you. My husband has gone away for a few days, so I have come to spend a nice long afternoon and evening with you, and I'll make tea for you in the studio just as I used to, and then we can have a nice little dinner somewhere, and you can put me in the train and send me home again."

I had, by this time, recovered my self-possession, which for a moment had deserted me. "Sorry, Maisie, but it can't be done." "Can't be done!" she exclaimed, "why not, Jules? Are you so hard up and can't afford it?" "No, not exactly," I replied. "Oh, I see," she said, "the programme's all right, but it happens you have already arranged it with some one else — some other woman?" I said nothing.

There was a painful little droop at the corner of her pretty mouth, then she added reproachfully, "O Jules, how could you? Well, I suppose it was too much to expect you to remain faithful to me all your life, and after I got married." I noticed a tear tremble in her eye, then roll down her cheek.

There was a tense pause, then as with a sudden resolve, she got up from her chair, and, holding out her hand, she said very softly, "Good-bye, Jules," and went down the stairs and out, whilst I stood there, I recollect, not knowing what I ought to do under the circumstances. After she was gone, on turning it over in my mind, I came to the conclusion it was all for the best.

One hears a lot about artists idealising their models, and there is undoubtedly a good deal of truth in it, for the charm of the successful picture lies, not so much in a close adherence to nature, as in the individualisation the painter puts into his work. It is this that constitutes the difference between a life-like portrait and a good picture; in the picture it is the individuality of the painter, in the portrait that of the sitter.

I can recollect how this idea was first impressed on me. When I was studying in Paris, I had occasion one day to visit the studio of my master Gérôme, and I found him at work from a model posing in front of him. I was immediately struck with the subtle difference there was between the painting and the original. That he could have made an exact likeness was obvious, but then it would have been merely a portrait, whereas what he had produced was an idealised painting of his model, which evidently embodied his conception of what he wanted.

The well-known axiom that you cannot make bricks without straw, almost applies to painting from the life. One cannot eliminate the model,

but the difficulty most artists have to contend with lies in finding one that approaches nearest to the realisation of their ideal.

I had a very curious experience which illustrates this during my life at St John's Wood. I had an idea for a picture which was suggested by a song that was very popular at the time, "Love's Golden Dream," but in order to paint it, I had to find just the type of face I had in my mind, as otherwise it would have been very commonplace.

For many weeks I was trying to find my "ideal," but in vain, and I had almost given up the idea of ever coming across it, when one night I was at Her Majesty's Theatre, where a pantomime was being played, when there suddenly appeared on the stage the very embodiment of my "ideal" for the picture.

She was one of the most lovely women I had ever seen. She was young, and had the most wonderful wavy fair hair imaginable. I could not take my eyes off her, and as soon as the piece was over I tried all I could to find some one who could give me an introduction, but in those days I had no acquaintances connected with theatre-land, so it was a very difficult matter, and I soon realised that I should have to take my chance of getting to know her with a formal presentation. I had serious thoughts of sending her a letter, but I felt, young and unknown artist as I then was, it was better not, so decided not to risk it until I had exhausted all other means of getting to know her.

From that moment I haunted the stage-door at night after the piece was over, in the hope that she might perchance come out alone one day, and give me the chance of speaking to her. On several occasions I caught a glimpse of her, but she was always accompanied, and I could not even manage to catch her eye. Little did she realise how ardent an admirer was lurking in the crowd round the stage-door.

At last, on one occasion, I saw her coming out alone. I pushed forward with the senseless idea that I might be able to get close enough to be able to tell her how anxious I was to paint her, but she was not alone for more than a moment, and I saw her drive off in a dainty *coupé* with some favoured admirer. I stood watching the carriage disappear and turned round to make my way home, when I knocked up against a girl who had just left the doorway. I was going to apologise, when, on looking at her, my heart leaped into my mouth, for she was the very replica of my "ideal."

I uttered such an involuntary exclamation of amazement that she gave me quite a startled look, and our eyes met. That look was in itself sufficient introduction, so I raised my hat and apologised for speaking to her, then straight away told her what had caused me to express such audible surprise. She listened with amused interest to what I told her, then to my astonishment she informed me she was the "understudy" of the lady in question, and laughingly asked me if she wouldn't do as well as her for the picture.

Nothing could have been more fortunate. I was indeed in luck's way, so I jumped at her suggestion, and she said that if I would give her my address she would come and see me the next day; then I could decide if she were sufficiently like my ideal for the wonderful picture I had in my mind. She lived in the opposite direction to me. She was, so she informed me, only quite a simple girl, without extravagant notions, so she went home by 'bus.

The next day, true to her promise, she turned up at the studio, and in the bright light of day she looked even prettier than I had thought her the previous evening.

It is a severe test of beauty to place it facing a big skylight, and a girl has to be very young and have a splendid complexion to stand it successfully.

I remember her laughingly waiting the result of my critical scrutiny. "Will I do?" she asked with mock seriousness, and I told her that if she would sit for the picture, I felt sure I should make a success of it. Well, she consented, and put her heart and soul into it.

I never had a better or more patient model, and if the picture had not turned out trumps it was through no fault of hers. But curiously enough the whole time I was painting her, though she was just the type I had been looking for, I still had in my mind the image of the other girl whose understudy she was, and strange as it may appear, actually painted the other girl's face from the girl who was sitting for me. This sounds somewhat Irish, but I hope I make myself understood, for this is essential, as will be seen by the curious *dénouement* of the incident.

All went without a hitch. The picture was bought by a West-End picture dealer, who had it reproduced in facsimile, and it eventually was to be seen in most of the print-sellers' windows.

Now comes the curious finale. Some months later I was at a public dance—I forget where now—and was standing by the door with a journalist friend watching the people come in, when my friend remarked, "What a lovely woman!" and, suddenly, who should enter with all the stately grace of a queen of beauty, but my "ideal" for the picture! I turned to my companion and somewhat excitedly asked whether he knew who she was. "Are you already smitten?" he asked with a laugh. "No, not exactly," I answered, "but curious to relate I painted one of my most successful pictures from her, and she doesn't know it." "Doesn't know it!" he ejaculated, and then I told him all about the incident.

It tickled his journalistic fancy immensely, and he said it was the strangest thing he had heard for a long time, and as a proof of this the following week,

to my amusement, he related the whole story in a paper he was connected with.

Two days later I received a letter from some one who was unknown to me, written from a very smart address. In it the writer informed me that he had read with much interest the story of my picture, as the lady in question was a particular friend of his, and he went on to say that the episode interested her immensely, and that if I were still anxious to make her acquaintance he would have much pleasure in introducing her to me, if I would call the following afternoon and take tea with them.

I had had many experiences of the accuracy of the adage that "Truth is often stranger than fiction," but this was, indeed, the strangest adventure of its kind I had ever yet had. Of course I accepted the invitation, and it was not without a certain amount of excitement that I was ushered into one of the daintiest little drawing-rooms imaginable, where I was received in the most genial and unreserved fashion by the writer of the letter, a fine, soldierly-looking man.

An instant after, the door opened, and in walked my "ideal," and I was presented as the artist of the picture. She was very merry, and made me feel quite at my ease.

As we were having tea I had the opportunity for taking a good look at her. The exquisitely furnished drawing-room made, as it were, a particularly appropriate set-off for her wonderful beauty, but somehow on a closer inspection I began to find flaws in my "ideal." Perhaps it was that I had succeeded in accomplishing what I had intended, and was no longer seeking an "ideal." It is always the unobtainable that excites the imagination, and now that I had obtained my desire I was disappointed with it. I found myself mentally comparing this smartly apparelled, up-to-date actress with the simple girl who had sat for my picture, and I confessed to

myself that in my mind my model came out best, because she was decidedly younger and fresher. Still it was quite remarkable the likeness between the two, the hair and complexion particularly. We naturally had a long chat over the incident, and I told her of my stage-door experiences, which made her laugh heartily. Then her friend remarked that she ought to sit for me for a real portrait, and she willingly agreed. So it was settled that I should start on it at once, and it was arranged that she should come to the studio for the purpose.

For several weeks, therefore, I had my quondam ideal to myself in the studio, but it was only with much difficulty that I succeeded in finishing the portrait, as she was not a patient model. I was not long in realising that if she had sat for my picture I should not have made it the success that I did. She was certainly a very lovely creature, and delightful company, but she was far too "material" to personate even on canvas a subject so ideal as "Love's Golden Dream," and I gradually found myself thinking more and more of her understudy, and congratulated myself on my luck in having met her. All of which went to prove to me that one's "ideal" is only what you picture to yourself in your mind, and it is perhaps fortunate that one so seldom comes across it in reality. Whilst on the subject I recall another experience, which, however, is quite the reverse of romantic. I was introduced to a very pretty girl at a fancy dress ball. She was in a nun's costume, and had such expressive eyes, and altogether looked so exactly the part, that it occurred to me that she was the very ideal for a picture of a *religieuse*. I asked her if she would come and sit to me for a picture in the costume. The idea seemed to please her immensely, and she consented, and came to the studio with the dress.

In order not to destroy the illusion, and also as I thought to convince her I was serious, I suggested

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"LOVE'S GOLDEN DREAM."

"— MADE A BLACK AND WHITE DRAWING OF HER AS A BALLET GIRL INSTEAD."

her going into the privacy of my bedroom to change into the costume. She said it didn't matter, but I insisted, for I felt that with a religious subject there must be no hints at levity.

When she returned to the studio she looked so demure and innocent that you would have thought that butter wouldn't melt in her pretty mouth. I started making sketches in various poses prior to deciding how to paint her, and whilst doing so was chatting with her on ecclesiastical matters, as befitted the dress she was wearing.

Whilst on the subject of religion I learned that she was a Roman Catholic, which struck me as particularly fortunate, as it accentuated, as it were, the illusion of her being a novice, so I said that I supposed she went to Mass regularly. "Go to Mass!" she repeated with a hearty laugh, which seemed strangely incongruous, "I haven't been there for quite ten years, and my sister was only saying the other day that if ever I went to confession now the priest would have to take brandy after I had finished!"

As may be imagined I did not feel inclined to paint her as a *religieuse* after that little avowal, so I postponed that picture and made a black and white drawing of her as a ballet girl instead, in a costume and tights I happened to have. She looked quite as piquant in it, and, as it turned out, it was far more appropriate.

CHAPTER XV

The "Grove of the Evangelists"—The "fastest" neighbourhood in London—Mixture of the reputable and disreputable in the Wood—The two classes of "gay" women—Streets of particularly ill-fame—Hanover Gardens—Wilton Street—A famous house of assignation—Extraordinary state of affairs—The "fast" lodging-houses—Money the fetish always—Extortionate prices—St John's Wood "pubs" as compared with Montmartre *cafés*—Rural quietude of certain streets—Sequestered gardens—Secluded villas—The hansom "cabbies"—Fancy boys—"Bruisers"—The "Judas"—The "best boy"—Signals to the "best boy"—The stamp paper—Beethoven's symphony—Luxury and sensuality—A masterpiece of voluptuousness—All sorts and conditions of tenants—An awkward *embroglio*—*Liaisons*—"Kept women"—Sordid arrangements—Calf love—Amusing incident—Story of a rich Frenchman and his mistress—The flashy, fair-haired *houris* of then—The "flapper" of to-day—Sunday tea parties—Drunkenness amongst women.

St John's Wood, in the days of which I am writing, was facetiously designated the "Grove of the Evangelists" by the man about town, and certain streets in it had a very unsavoury reputation; as a matter of fact it was popularly considered the "fastest" neighbourhood in London, and supposed to be inhabitated principally by theatre people, artists, and prostitutes. The character of the whole district is completely changed now, owing to two causes, firstly, the advent of the Great Central Railway, and secondly, the modern fashion adopted by the women of living in flats. The railway has entirely obliterated streets that in my young days were practically in the possession of loose women. They were fairly long thoroughfares then, but are merely names now, and quite

non-existent, whilst with others that were notorious five-and-twenty years ago, and still remain, their character is so altered that they are respectable roads to-day.

As I have said, it was a curious anomaly, the mixture of the reputable and disreputable in St John's Wood, and it was hard to explain. The fact, however, was indisputable, and to me, was always somewhat of a mystery. At an hour when all the good folk had long been at home and in bed, the echoes of the quiet neighbourhood would be awakened by the clatter of hansom cabs bringing these ladies of pleasure from their West End haunts, more often than not shouting and singing.

Curiously enough, although certain of the streets were inhabited almost entirely by this class of woman, one would hardly have guessed the character of their houses from their prosperous, middle-class appearance outside. Had one not known of the reputation of the neighbourhood, there was little to draw one's attention to it beyond seeing smartly dressed women driving down West at night, alone, and returning, usually accompanied, in the small hours of the morning.

There were two classes of gay women, the fortunate ones who were generally living under the protection of a well-to-do admirer, and who had dainty little detached villas in secluded gardens, and the less fortunate, who only occupied lodgings, and made their living from day to day on the streets of the West End. It was seldom one saw any of them about during the day time, so in reality there was little to offend the eye of the respectable inhabitants. Occasionally on a fine afternoon, well turned-out dog-carts, driven by flashy-looking women, and generally accompanied by very good-looking grooms, would dash past, which would cause people, if the driver were particularly attractive, to turn round and smile with a world of meaning; but, as a rule,

no one took much notice of the goings-on of the *demi-mondaines*; it was sufficient to know they lived there, and unless something drew special attention to them, they were unnoticed.

When I was living in the Wood, there were several streets of particularly ill-fame: Park Road, Lodge Road, Alpha Road, Omega Place, Lorne Gardens, and North and South Bank—which were so named by reason of their situation on either side of the Canal — Wellington Road, Elm Tree Road, and many others.

Apart from the streets above named there were two which bore so terrible a character, even for St John's Wood, that they require special reference—Hanover Gardens, which had been re-named Lorne Gardens, and has now practically ceased to exist, and Wilton Street, which was also re-christened. It was said in those days that there had never been anything in London to equal them for downright iniquity, and of Wilton Street in particular, that it was "the limit." I can well remember my impression on first passing through it, and how in my mind I contrasted it with the very lowest quarters in Paris, and was forced to the conclusion that the latter had nothing to teach London in this respect.

In the summer evenings one saw women of the most degraded kind, young and old, and in every kind and stage of outrageous attire, sitting on the balconies or doorsteps, or hanging out of the windows of the three-storied houses, leering at the male passers-by, in the very sight of innocent children playing about on the pavement and in the roadway.

Not the least curious feature was the way in which the authorities for many years apparently winked at this state of affairs, which was positively a disgrace to what ought to have been a fine residential neighbourhood. In North Bank there was quite a famous house of assignation kept by a Madam J——.

It was most luxuriously furnished, and it was said she had most of the best-looking girls in the town on her books, and all the "biggest swells" used to go there. Streets, which have now become quite respectable, at that time were entirely given up to harlotry of the most brazen type. As an instance of the most extraordinary state of affairs existing, I may mention that I have myself seen in broad daylight two women stripped to the waist fighting in a front garden in South Bank, with a crowd of children looking on.

It is probably no exaggeration to assert that there was only a sprinkling of respectable houses in any parts of these roads in those days. The wonder was that there were any at all; yet in one or two of them there were distinguished writers and others who lived cheek by jowl with the lowest characters, as, for instance, Wilson Barrett, and Beatty Kingston, in North Bank, Henry Herman, the author of "The Silver King," in Alpha Road, and many others whose names I cannot recall at the moment.

The lodging-houses were usually run by oldish women, who had been at the game themselves, and who, when *passées*, in their turn, started fleecing the younger generation, as they themselves had been fleeced in their time. The most fantastic prices were often extorted from women for apartments and board, anything, in fact, they might be thought able to pay, and woe betide any girl who was behindhand with her rent, especially if she showed signs of not attending to her "business," and often came home at night alone. The hags who were their landladies seldom had much compassion on them.

Money was the fetish always — no money, no anything. Many of the women had bullies living with them, and one was continually hearing tales of blackmail and extortion. Drinks of the vilest description were sold in all the houses, but at prices that make one smile to think of—5s. for a

brandy or whisky and soda; two drinks, one for the man and one for the woman, always came to 10s. A bottle of so-called "champagne," £1. Food, in the shape of supper, was never to be had unless the landlady happened to have a bit of cold meat in the house, or you brought in something with you, which, of course, they didn't object to because it meant more drinks with it.

One was reminded of the unsavoury streets in certain districts in Paris where the under-world congregates, with the exception that there were no *cafés* or *brasseries* to liven up this quarter. The various large public-house private bars were frequented by women, but there was nothing of a light-hearted character to offer attraction to the usual casual customer; whereas in Montmartre, even the lowest of the *cafés* presented some fascination to the student of life in its various aspects. These "pubs," however lavishly decorated and brilliantly lighted, were nothing but low drinking resorts after all, and the drunken women one saw in them made them appear still more repulsive.

St John's Wood has indeed a lot to be thankful for to the Great Central Railway, although it may have depreciated certain parts of it from the landlord's point of view. It is a far cry from the days when, as the old "chestnut" had it, a "masher" of the period jumped into a hansom and told the man to drive him to the Bank, to be met with the query, "North or South, sir?"

Curiously enough there was a certain air of mystery about some of the more secluded roads, as, for instance, Elm Tree Road, which presented almost a rural aspect, more especially in the summer time. The fine old trees and the high walls which surrounded the sequestered gardens combined to impart an impression of quietude and charm one would hardly have expected in so notorious a neighbourhood.

All the houses being built in the villa style, which was so distinct a characteristic of suburban architecture in the early days, and surrounded by quite picturesque gardens, offered, therefore, a much desired privacy, which it was difficult to find elsewhere or in more public streets. I have often thought if these quaint little houses could speak, what stories most of them would have to relate.

I am, of course, only referring now to a curious phase in the life of St John's Wood in those days. Elm Tree Road was one of the smartest and the best frequented in the neighbourhood, and the women who lived there were generally more prosperous and less disorderly than their sisters in the other roads I have mentioned. Several nice people, and some well-known artists, as I have said, had studios here, and that, I thought, gave a certain tone to the road; but this was only a thin veneer of respectability, for early in the evening and late at night the many hansoms and smart broughams going to the various houses would rudely dispel the feeling of rural quietude and remind one that gilded vice had its abode there.

The hansom cabbies must have had good times from all accounts, for they would frequently be kept waiting all night, as was well known, and these men could have told some curious stories of the goings-on of the swells and the smart *demi-mondaines*. It was often hinted that several of the dapper drivers of the best turned-out cabs were really the "fancy-boys" of the ladies they drove down West in the day or to Richmond on Sundays, and, judging from appearance, there was probably a good deal of truth in it, as they could scarcely manage to dress themselves as they did, with their wonderfully shiny hats and smart gloves, patent boots, flower in button-hole, on their legitimate earnings.

They were often also "bruisers" as well, if one could believe the stories one was continually hearing

of their goings-on, and woe betide the masher who tried to bilk a girl, or who did not shell out what they thought he ought to pay in the shape of fare. In the ill-lighted, deserted streets, late at night, he had a bad time of it if he could not take care of himself, though it sometimes happened that the cabby found he had caught a tartar. In these days of taxis and electric light, it is hardly conceivable what was possible when I lived in the Wood, and although probably a good deal of the same sort of thing still exists, though in another form, there is no doubt the entire class of men is different now.

The doors in the garden walls of the villas were always jealously closed, and in many of them there was a small "Judas" through which the visitor could be scrutinised, and, if he were not known, his business ascertained before the door was opened. This appearance of secrecy made the houses still more mysterious, but the reason of it in most cases was not far to seek. With such women as inhabited these houses fidelity is not a characteristic trait, and it was probably seldom that one of them kept faith with the man who provided her with the house in which she lived and the means of satisfying her extravagant tastes.

Many of the fair denizens of these secluded villas had their "best boys," who would profit by the absence of the owner, who was probably an elderly man, to take his place and have a good time with his lady-love. These "fancy men" were quite a different class, as a rule, to the low-down bullies and pimps who battened on the unfortunates in the common streets. It was in order to guard against surprise visits that the "Judas" was cut in the door, as through the narrow aperture it was easy to see in an instant who was outside and to give or receive letters or messages. Endless were the stories of adventures in this connection, for it generally happened

that the "best boy" was a hefty youth, particularly well constituted physically for these amorous escapades. It may be of interest to recall that very big women were the favourites then, for the "flapper" of to-day was non-existent. No doubt bachelors of gregarious tastes had many opportunities for adventures of a gallant nature in these quiet by-ways. For myself I saw no charm in them. Perhaps my character tends somewhat to the sentimental side, and there must ever be for me a touch of the romantic. I am afraid, notwithstanding many shattered illusions, it is my nature always to hoist my latest "attraction" on to a pedestal. One did not, however, live in the midst of all this fast life with one's eyes shut, and I recall many weird and amusing subterfuges to circumvent the precautions of the liege lord to remain in sole possession.

One of the tricks struck me as being extremely ingenious in its simplicity. When Miss Kathleen De Vere (as we will call her—for all these ladies were called by aristocratic names) received an unexpected visit from her aged but wealthy admirer at a moment when she was awaiting the more congenial arrival of her best boy for the moment, her maid had instructions to stick a piece of stamp paper in a pre-arranged spot in a dark corner of the gateway. Then when Algy turned up, full of love and anticipation, he recognised the warning that the coast was not clear, and departed disconsolate, after having removed the stamp paper as a return signal that he had kept the appointment.

In many of the houses the door would not be opened unless a signal which had been preconcerted was given. This either took the form of a peculiar knock or a particular whistle. A lady who was of musical tastes had conceived the idea of getting her lover to signal his presence outside by whistling the opening bars of Beethoven's famous No. 5 Symphony in C Minor!

Had she, I wonder, heard the legend attaching to this symphony?—that Beethoven, lying ill in bed, in the small hours of the morning, heard a man who had lost his latchkey trying to attract the attention of his wife by repeated whistlings in this peculiar fashion, outside the street door — the reiterated whistling starting the vein of musical thought which led to a masterpiece.

Many of the houses were decorated and furnished in most luxurious fashion, and not infrequently displayed evidence of artistic taste that would be somewhat unexpected. A house agent in the neighbourhood gave me an explanation of this, which was somewhat curious, though quite feasible.

A lady would, on the guarantee of a gentleman who was looking after her for the time being, take a house on an agreement, and probably before moving in she would get her friend to have it thoroughly decorated and furnished. A few months after, perhaps, there would be trouble in the dovecot, and the place sold up, and probably bought by some one else who also had a Dulcinea he wanted to keep all to himself. The place might want doing up a bit, and, doubtless, would be, and so the process would continue, each successive tenant adding and perhaps improving, or otherwise, on what had been done by her predecessor, till the whole place, at last, might become quite artistic and elegant in effect.

I remember on one occasion being taken to one which was the very quintessence of luxurious sensuality, if one can so describe it.

Everything that was calculated to excite the jaded fancies of the *blasé* voluptuary had evidently been carefully and thoughtfully designed, and the result could certainly not have been excelled even in Paris, where, in my time, this style of furnishing was very much in vogue, and was a sort of trade in itself, as only a few firms laid themselves out

for it. In this particular St John's Wood retreat the decorator and the upholsterer had borrowed their ideas from the East, and had succeeded in producing quite a masterpiece of voluptuousness. From the moment one entered, a strange feeling of fascination took hold of you. The windows were all covered with *musharabeyah* work, which effectually screened the light, so you felt as though trespassing into a harem.

The illusion was heightened by the heavy odour of a seductive perfume, and the costume—or rather the lack of costume—of the fair occupant of this abode of love, a strikingly beautiful woman. She was reclining on a low, wide Turkish divan under a tent-like awning, and half buried in big, soft cushions. She had on a semi-transparent drapery of some Persian material that disguised, without hiding, her shapely form, and here and there a tiny gold crescent scintillated, or a metal ornament rattled as she moved languidly, for it was very hot and oppressive in the house.

My pal, who took me there, and was a very great friend of hers, told me that I should see something which would startle me, but this was quite a revelation, and certainly a very delightful one, for I am not a prude in any way, as may have already been surmised; but I could not help wondering whether she had donned this attire for my benefit, or if it were her usual reception dress. To my great surprise I learnt she was English, for her surroundings and tastes were evidently quite Oriental.

There were no chairs, so we had to sit on the ground, which was covered with matting, whilst here and there were hassocks and cushions. Coffee was served to us by a coloured servant—Turkish fashion, in keeping with everything else, and every detail was carried out to perfection.

Our hostess expressed her regret that a great friend of hers, "a lovely girl," she had invited to meet me,

was unable to come, as her "gentleman friend" had returned to town unexpectedly, but she hoped to see me another time. I had, however, already made a mental note that this was no place for me, artistically beautiful as it was, for it represented a world with which I was not in touch or ever likely to be—the world of the idle, elderly rich man—the *vieux marcheur*. I felt sure without seeing her that the "lovely girl" who had not been able to join us was of the same class as this semi-nude Venus in front of me. It was, perhaps, therefore a lucky thing for me her being otherwise engaged, and it afforded a very good excuse for not prolonging my visit. So wishing my friend a good time, I left him with his lady-love.

When I found myself outside in the bright sunshine of the summer afternoon, I could not help thinking how little one would have expected, in this humdrum London of ours, to have come across anything so Eastern in its sensuality.

Most of the delightful semi-rural villas, standing in their own gardens, had seen all sorts and conditions of tenants, and on occasions awkward *embroglios* arose from the inability of visitors to realise this.

A case in point I recollect was of two young officers home on leave from India, feeling somewhat elated after a good dinner, wending their way to a cosy nest which they remembered before they had gone abroad, and where they felt they were sure to find a loving and ardent welcome.

To all outward appearance the house was unchanged, and it took the combined arguments of two prim maid-servants and finally the persuasion of a burly policeman to convince them that Maud and Ethel had made way for more desirable tenants, and to induce them after half-an-hour's parley to retire crestfallen.

Imagine their horror when a few days later they received a letter from their Colonel's wife inviting

them to dine with her and her mother at the very house where they had attempted their raid, and which she had taken for the season!

As may be imagined St John's Wood was a perfect paradise for house agents, and they would frequently let the same house two or three times a year, for those love affairs were very seldom of a lasting nature. There were, however, one or two I heard of which had continued after cat-and-dog sort of fashion for many years, but they did so simply because the man, perhaps, was getting on in years, or was either too frightened to break it off, or else that the woman in the course of their *liaison* had managed to get to know something of him or his business of a private nature, and which she held as a sort of sword of Damocles over his head.

The seamy side of this phrase of Bohemian life in those days was, to my mind, more marked in London than in Paris, perhaps by reason of the matter-of-fact way men treated the women they took up with. One could not help noticing this, and at times it made one's blood boil to watch it, whilst one pitied the woman who stood it. The "modern girl" has far more spirit and independence in this respect, and would not put up with it for a moment.

In those days the term "kept woman" was quite common, and though synonymous with the French *maitresse*, it had scarcely the same significance, I thought. It was rarely that there was any semblance of romance or love about these sordid arrangements even from the start, and they were usually entered into in the same manner as one would an ordinary business transaction.

In Paris a man would commence probably by delicately sending the object of his desire some flowers, or some dainty present to propitiate her; in London, to put it roughly, it was generally a question of "How much do you want me to allow

you a week? so that you don't have to see any one else"—without any other preliminaries. With the knowledge that must have been intuitive to most "kept" women that they were only being made conveniences of for a time, it could hardly be wondered at that in pure self-defence, and especially if they were no longer young, that they should attempt to get a more secure hold of their man, and this, no doubt, accounted for much of the trouble one heard of, and the large sums of money men of means often had to "shell out" to get rid of an irksome tie.

Occasionally, however, there were cases, as it were, of sentiment intermingled with the monetary relations, but it was generally the calf-love of some youth who had lost his heart over a woman. Still, it was genuine affection on his part while it lasted, and it not infrequently happened that the object of his admiration really ended by liking him very much, more especially if he combined nice presents with his love.

I remember a little story a very good-looking, fair-haired woman, living in Wellington Road, told me of an experience she had once had, and its amusing ending. An Eton boy whom she had got to know somehow had fallen violently in love with her, and used to come up to town as often as he could to see her, and spent all his money on her—in fact more, for he ended by borrowing so as to give her presents. Of course, it ended by her getting quite fond of the lad, for he was a very gentle and delightful companion.

Well, this had been going on for some time, and she guessed he was getting deeply into debt on her account, when one day she received a visit from a stranger, an old gentleman of most staid appearance. To her surprise he told her he was the father of her youthful lover, and had come to have a chat with her about his son.

Of course, she divined at once that it was on no subject likely to give her pleasure that he had called, so she quite expected a sermon, but she was mistaken. He commenced by telling her in a very paternal manner that he knew all about the little love affair, and that he was at first inclined to be very angry with his son about it and take drastic steps to put a stop to it, but on mature reflection he had decided to call and see her first, and appeal to her to break it off herself. He implored her to listen to his entreaties to give up his son. She must know it was only a boy's infatuation, and it would break his mother's heart.

Naturally, she was very much upset on hearing all this, for she was quite a good sort, so she consented to do what the father asked her, and it was arranged she should not see the youngster again when he called.

The old gentleman seized her hand, and, suddenly drawing her towards him, gave her a paternal kiss, and thanked her profusely, more profusely perhaps than was necessary, and was taking his departure when, as though a sudden thought had struck him, he returned, and, putting his arm affectionately round her waist, said he had taken quite a fancy to her himself, and asked her if she would dine with him that evening somewhere on the quiet. The idea so tickled her that for the fun of the thing she said she would, and did.

A few days later she received a letter from the elder brother of the boy lover, saying that he had heard that "she had dined with the pater the other evening." He was writing to her in confidence to ask if she would come out with him also, as he was so anxious to know her! But she thought she had done enough for the family, and did not reply to his letter.

In France, where a long attachment in Bohemia very often ends in marriage, one seldom hears of

such a state of affairs, although, of course, it frequently happens that it is difficult to sever a long connection, but it is more often a case of *laisser-aller*, the couple get used to each other, and even if their long association does not end in wedlock, they continue together almost through sheer force of habit.

They used to tell the story in Paris of a rich man who had kept the same mistress for many years, and to whom he was genuinely very attached. He was a married man, but his wife had been an invalid from the commencement of their married life, so there was some excuse for the *liaison*, and, as a matter of fact, it was commonly supposed that she acquiesced in it, as they got on in a very friendly sort of way, and so long as he paid her a certain amount of attention she never complained of his leaving her of an evening after dinner, which he did regularly, to visit his *amie*. His wife at length died after lingering on for a long while, and a few months later a friend met the widower, and when the usual expressions of sympathy had passed, asked him when he was going to get married to his old *maitresse*, since he was so fond of her. "Get married!" was the reply, "why should I? I am quite happy as I am, I shouldn't know what on earth to do with my evenings if I married her!"

Differents pays, differents mœurs — and although men kept women in St John's Wood, it was very different and far more matter-of-fact an affair than across the Channel, for there was seldom much love in these *ménages*, as far as I could judge from what I learnt. Roughly speaking, it was simply a question of barter. The woman had something to sell, and the man bought it for the time being, and so long as it suited him he stuck to it.

Romance was out of the question. Conceit had a lot to do with it, as it generally has in these

matters. The middle-aged man of pleasure liked to preen himself on Sundays driving in a phaeton or dog-cart down to the "Star and Garter" at Richmond, accompanied by some flashy, fair-haired *houri*.

"That's a devilish fine woman I saw you with yesterday, my boy," his pals at the club will perhaps tell him. He is delighted, and will fancy himself no end of a dog and a lady-killer.

The same sort of thing exists, no doubt, to some extent, nowadays, but it is not so much *en evidence*, perhaps because a different class of woman has sprung up which is not so blatant as that of twenty-five years ago, and also, as I have said, because it is the era of the simple girl and the "flapper," not of the big, showy type of over-dressed woman that was so much admired formerly.

In the days of which I am writing the women used to have tea parties on Sundays, and there would often be rollicking times, for whisky or brandy and soda would be more popular than the "cup that cheers," and a lot of heavy drinking took place which doubtless accounted for the redundant figures of the fair sex of the period.

Things have improved vastly since then, not that I would for a moment suggest that vice no longer exists, as fast men and loose women will always be until the end of time; but it is in other respects that all is changed for the better.

For one thing there is, I fancy, less drinking, and in its place one notes a vast amelioration in the tone of the *demi-monde* in London, at any rate. When I lived in the Wood drunkenness, even amongst quite respectable women, was common. How any woman addicted to drink could inspire tender sentiments in a man was to me always a mystery, or how love could exist at all if either the man or the woman drank, was an enigma which I did not care to attempt to solve.

CHAPTER XVI

Heavy drinking amongst women, *continued*—A terrible scene in my studio—A midnight visitor—A fortunate interruption—My friend the doctor—Extraordinary *dénouement*—Effect of drink on different women—A curious incident—The bell on the leg of the table.

IN London in those days one could not shut one's eyes to the fact that there was a lot of heavy drinking, amongst women especially, nor was this confined to the "fast" set only, for I knew of several homes which had been practically broken up through it. There were not the counter-attractions and easy methods of getting about that exist nowadays, and this may perhaps account for what was almost a national canker twenty-five years ago, and of the existence of which one was continually reminded.

I shall never forget as long as I live a terrible scene which took place once in my studio. Although it happened many years ago, every incident of it remains clear in my memory, and as the people concerned in it are both dead, I have no hesitation in relating it here.

I was sitting up rather later than usual finishing a drawing with the light full on in the studio, and therefore any one could see from outside that I was in, when there was a ring at the bell. It was rather an unusual thing to get visitors at nearly 1 o'clock in the morning, so I went down to open the door, wondering who on earth it could be.

To my surprise I saw it was a very pretty model

I knew, who had sat for me once or twice. Naturally —as a lonely bachelor—I was delighted to see her, so without any hesitation I asked her upstairs. She did not require much persuasion, and when we got into the studio, I saw she was in evening dress, very *decolletée*, with a cloak thrown over her shoulders. With a sort of grunt of contentment she flopped into an armchair, and, looking round the place, expressed her pleasure in somewhat peculiar language, considering how little I knew her, at finding me in.

Then without further parley she asked me to give her a drink, as she felt positively parched, she said. The tone in which she asked for it still further astonished me, for it seemed more like an order than a polite request. However, I took no notice of it and produced a bottle of brandy, which, as it unfortunately happened, I had in the studio.

Something in her manner roused my suspicion; it struck me she had been drinking, so I determined to keep my eye on the bottle and not let her have too much, as I didn't want any unpleasantness if I could help it. But she forestalled me; seizing a glass she helped herself so liberally that she fairly made me gasp. I handed her the water bottle as I had no soda. "Water!" she exclaimed scornfully. "Who wants water?" "I want something to buck me up, and water won't do it. Well, here goes, good luck!" and with that she drank off in one gulp half a tumbler of neat brandy.

I looked on positively speechless. She was always such a nice, quiet girl when sitting for me, that it was a revelation, this unexpected side of her character. There was not much time for reflection.

The strong, raw liquor seemed to have an instantaneous effect on her, and I at once realised that unless I could mollify her there was going to be trouble, so I started a conversation on casual subjects in the hope that she would not notice

that there was still some brandy left; but her thirst was unslaked. Without hesitation she said she wanted some more, so I gently hinted that it was very fiery brandy, and she ought not to drink it undiluted.

That started the ball rolling. "Not drink it plain," she reiterated; was I so stingy that I grudged her a little drop of brandy, because if so, she would pay me for it, she could afford it, and taking her purse out of her bosom, she emptied its contents out on the table, and told me in insolent tones "to help myself."

In vain did I try to pacify her. She was rapidly getting worse, and with much volubility began accusing me of all manner of awful things. It was no use attempting to check her, so I tried another scheme and treated it as though I thought it a good joke on her part, and that she was only pretending to be drunk. But nothing would stop her flow of diabolical language.

Then she turned her attention to my paintings, one in particular in a fine frame coming in for special abuse, as there was a girl painted in it for which she had not sat. I hope never to have to listen again to such invectives from a woman, and all the time I was on tenterhooks in case she got up and put something through the canvas, or started smashing things in the studio.

Here was a pretty predicament indeed! What could I do? To go out and fetch Harris from next door to give me a hand in silencing her was out of the question. I dared not leave her in the place alone for an instant. In the meantime she was gradually working herself into a positive frenzy, and I realised it was a madwoman I had to deal with. "I have been waiting for this," she at length exclaimed, springing up from her chair, as I made some remark intended to be of a pacific nature; "and I'll show you what sort of girl I am."

What she was going to do, I don't know, for at that moment there came a loud ring at the bell, and that stopped her and gave me time to collect my wits. "Sit down and keep still," I said peremptorily. "We don't want any scenes here—you understand?" Curiously enough she obeyed me.

I hurried down to the door to see who it was, and wondering if it was another woman visitor, when, to my inexpressible relief, I saw it was a great friend of mine, a doctor; a very good fellow who often used to drop in and have a smoke with me. I was positively trembling with excitement after my nerve-racking experience, and was overjoyed to see him, as he was perhaps the best man I could have found to help me out of my difficulty.

In as few words as possible I hastily told him what had occurred, and asked if he would lend me a hand to get her out of the studio. He was a very big and powerful man, and loved anything where his strength would be of service. "Lend you a hand, Jules, my boy? Of course I will," he replied with a grin. "Lead the way upstairs and let's have a look at the lady." So up I went, my friend following slowly, so as not to spoil the effect.

The sight that met my eyes was the most repulsive one I ever saw. In the few minutes I had been downstairs at the door she had got hold of the brandy bottle and quite finished its contents, and was leaning against the table to steady herself. Her hair all dishevelled, and with eyes glaring round like those of a wild beast, she was a horrible spectacle of depravity.

"What the hell do you mean by leaving me like this?" she yelled. "Don't you know how to behave to a lady when you've got one in your bloody studio." "A friend has dropped in to see me," I replied with assurance, for I knew there was nothing further to fear from her. "To hell with you and

your friends!" she just had time to vociferate, when my friend mounted the last step, and entering the studio, faced her.

What followed then was more like a scene on the stage than something in real life. To my utter amazement he gave an exclamation of surprise on seeing her, and exclaimed hoarsely, "What! you here?" There was a deep silence for a moment, the two stood facing each other. The woman seemed as though absolutely petrified with horror. Her senses appeared to have suddenly returned to her. Then my friend, without taking any notice of me, walked slowly towards her, and, looking her straight in the eyes, said in slow, deliberate tones, "So you've started again, have you? Well, you know what is in store for you this time. I'm not going to give you another chance." He was livid with rage and hatred. Going up to the woman, he seized her roughly by the arm with a grip which I knew well. "Come along, out of this," he said, with the abruptness of a policeman.

Then the woman, to my utter stupefaction, flung herself on the ground and clung to his knees, shrieking, "No, no, Jim, not that. For God's sake give me another chance for the sake of old times. Don't put me back there. I'll never touch the drink again in future. I swear, by God, Jim, I won't." She was quite sane now, as if by magic. I should never have believed such a change possible in so few minutes. But he would not listen to her entreaties. Without loosening his hold on her arm he said grimly, "I don't intend to give you another opportunity, my lady. You've got to come with me, and if you don't come quietly, I'll have to make you, so don't let's have any nonsense about it. Come on, out of this." The woman, evidently realising that her entreaties were of no avail, burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, and allowed herself to be taken down the stairs, or rather forced to go

down, because the stairway was very narrow, and there was not room for two people abreast.

Meanwhile I was standing looking on helplessly, judging intuitively that it was best not to interfere, as I knew nothing whatever about the woman or the rights or wrongs of the case, though I guessed there was something behind it all that justified him in doing what he was doing. Looking through the studio window I saw him still gripping her by the arm, leading her through the garden to the street, then call a four-wheeler from the rank close by, put her into it, and drive away.

I heard no more of the incident until two days afterwards, when he called on me, and the mystery was cleared up. To my surprise I learned that he knew that she had been a model, and that the woman was his wife. They had been married about four years; but he had had an awful time of it owing to her drinking propensities. On several occasions, he told me, she had disgraced him by getting locked up for disorderly conduct. Matters had got so bad that at last in sheer self-defence, as she was ruining his practice, he had had to have her put in a home for inebriates, and it was only a few days previously, on her taking a solemn vow that she would give up drinking, that he consented to her coming out. But he had then given her distinctly to understand that if it ever happened again he would have her put in an asylum for an indefinite period, as there was no doubt it was a form of lunacy which required a long seclusion, if it could be cured at all.

It appeared that the night she had come to me he had had to dine out, and on returning discovered she was not in the house. Immediately suspecting that she had had a relapse, he had started searching for her in every likely place, even the police stations in the West End, and it was by the merest chance that he happened to notice the light in my studio

as he drove past, and it must have been a sort of telepathy that made him stop his cab and ring my bell. In spite of all her entreaties and protestations, he added, he had adhered to his resolve to rid himself of her this time, once and for all, and he had concluded the necessary arrangements for her being taken into an asylum at once, as she was on the verge of insanity.

She died a few weeks later, a raving lunatic, I subsequently learned. For a long while afterwards the memory of this awful experience haunted me, and I don't think I should have been in a hurry to open the street door had there been a ring at the bell late at night.

Ever since then the sight of a woman drinking even a liqueur of brandy arouses in me feelings of disgust.

There is no doubt there was a lot of tippling on the sly amongst women of all classes in those days, for it was not an uncommon thing to hear of men having trouble with their wives on this account. I often used to think how surprised Frenchmen must have been at some of the sights that were of constant occurrence in this respect, for across the Channel drinking amongst women is unknown, and the whole time I lived in France I can safely assert I never once saw a drunken woman, nor did I ever hear of one.

The way the drink affected different women was in itself a curious study. Of course I don't refer to the "Have a drop of gin, dear" class—they were too well known to need referring to; but to those who could afford to indulge their particular fancy, such as brandy and soda, or Eau de Cologne, on the quiet. Many a time at nice houses did I meet ladies who were, perhaps, not actually drunk, but decidedly fuddled—otherwise there was no possible explanation for their idiotic behaviour.

As a rule the delinquents were women well over

the age when they might still call themselves young, from thirty and upwards, in fact, from the commencement of the period when they began to realise they were getting *passée*, mostly vain women who sought consolation for lost beauty or for some fancy grievance, and when under the influence of a "little drop too much" would become obsessed with all sorts of weird notions.

These were the worst of the whole lot, and probably caused more mischief than all the out-and-out drunkards together. Woe betide the man who even unwittingly rubbed them the wrong way. I came across several of this category at different times, whilst living in the Wood, and knowing their character, was always on my best behaviour, and treated them with the utmost deference for fear of incurring their enmity. But once a woman is inclined to be hysteric through drink there is no knowing what she may do or say.

A friend of mine told me once of a curious incident that happened to him, and which I have always thought of in this connection. He was a well-to-do, elderly bachelor, and lived in a charming house not far from Finchley Road, where he used to dispense a good deal of hospitality when he was in London. I may add that being a man of means, and also sybaritical tastes, he had everything arranged in his rooms with a view to comfort and elegance.

One day he was entertaining a friend of his and his wife, whom he had never met before, to lunch. At the end of the repast, just as they were about to commence smoking, the man said he had brought a very special cigar with him for my friend, and getting up from the table went out of the room to fetch it from his case in his overcoat pocket.

It is necessary to mention here that the luncheon table was oval, and that my friend was seated at the head of it, with the lady on his right hand,

and her husband facing her. As a rule, when alone, he usually sat where the lady was seated, as he had an electric bell fitted to the leg of the table, so that he could ring for the servants without disturbing himself by getting up.

Whilst the husband was out of the room my friend wanted the coffee brought in, so he reached down his hand at the side of the table to ring the bell. To his horror, the lady started back in her chair, exclaiming, "No, no, don't; my husband will be back directly!" Here was an awkward predicament. What he ought to do or say he hadn't the slightest idea. It flashed across his mind that it was either a case of deliberately putting himself in the wrong or making an enemy of the woman for life. Providentially for him the husband re-entered the room at that moment, and saved the situation.

CHAPTER XVII

I take up caricaturing—Sir Frederick Leighton introduces me to W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.—His kindly reception of me—Difficulties the cartoonist has to contend with—Human weaknesses—Amusing incidents—The Frenchmen's tooth—The caricature on the table top — A shirt-front souvenir — Sketching for the paper—The "Unemployed" Riots—Trafalgar Square on Sunday afternoons —Sir Charles Warren and the police—Mr Hyndman—An unforgettable experience—The "Special Constables"—I join and am sworn in—The Socialists outwitted—Sir Charles Warren's clever stratagem—Funny incident—"A perfect lidy"—My first literary work for a daily paper—My meeting with Mr W. T. Stead—I go over to Paris for the *Illustrated* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* to interview and sketch President Carnot, General Boulanger, and others—My impression of the President of the Republic—An invitation to a reception at the Elysée—Joke of my pals—The scene at the reception—My interview with General Boulanger—Monsieur de Blowitz — Monsieur Eiffel, Campbell Clarke, and Caran d'Ache—Satisfactory results of my Paris visit—Mr Stead's facetious remark.

THIS is going to be a serious chapter, otherwise it may be inferred that my life in those days was mostly play and very little work, whereas it was not really so. I don't know whether it was the atmosphere of St John's Wood, or the fact that I was still on the right side of thirty; but during the whole time I was at 3 Blenheim Place I was consumed with a restless energy for work, which was continually stimulating me to make fresh efforts, whilst waiting another opportunity for a journey for the *Illustrated London News*. Wars or expeditions to far-off lands don't, however, come along with the frequency a travelling correspondent desires, so I determined to have another string to my bow,

as black and white work did not take up all my time.

With this idea in my mind I thought I would have a shot at caricaturing, which had always been more or less a hobby of mine. It had been my ambition to see some of my productions in *Vanity Fair*, which was then at the zenith of its fame with Pellegrini, making all London laugh with his wonderful cartoons. And in this aspiration I was encouraged by Sir Frederick Leighton, who, on several occasions when I had ventured to show him specimens of what I could do in this direction, had paid me some very great compliments.

My first serious effort, I remember, which, I may add, led to my doing quite a lot of work, not only for *Vanity Fair*, but many other papers, was a cartoon of W. Q. Orchardson, the famous Royal Academician. On the introduction of Leighton, he was kind enough to give me a special sitting for the purpose.

It was on this occasion, I recollect, that I discovered I possessed the perhaps peculiar faculty, if I may so call it, of not being in the least perturbed by the importance of my sitters. I found I could look on them all as merely my models *pro tem.*, and in later years, when in the course of my journalistic career, I had occasion to interview and sketch many eminent people, I found this *insouciance*, so to speak, of invaluable service. I have never felt it militated in the slightest degree against the accomplishment of the work I had in view; rather the contrary, in fact, as it generally put me at once on a friendly footing with my subject. The bump of obsequiousness is, I am afraid, not strongly developed in me.

Orchardson lived just off Victoria Street, Westminster, and his studio was very characteristic of his work. It was very spacious and lofty, and the aspect singularly austere and early Victorian, even to the walls which were very monotonous in tone,

W. G. ORCHARDSON, R.A.

though doubtless that was very useful to him in his painting, as he only had to glance round about him to get suggestions for the effect he was seeking. This was, as I have said, my first attempt at a cartoon for publication, and I remember I was quite pleased to find how facile the work was apparently, because I did it quite easily. It was only afterwards that I realised the success of the drawing was due to Orchardson having afforded me every facility for getting it right. Many men I portrayed in after years seemed to think it was an act of condescension on their part, even letting you look at them, let alone sketch them. He was engaged on a large and important picture on the day of my visit, and I begged him not to leave off work on my account, as I thought it would be much more interesting to sketch him whilst he was painting, for it was not every day one could have an opportunity for observing the methods of a great artist *à l'œuvre*. What I remember impressed me most was the small size brushes he used in comparison to the dimensions of the canvas. It struck me that it must require a quite exceptional amount of patience and conviction to cover it so slowly—yet what splendid results he achieved with these little brushes.

I did not take long to realise that it was quite the exception to find a sitter so affable and unassuming as Orchardson, and that in cartoon work as in serious portraiture you had to contend with that most pitiful of human weaknesses, vanity. In nine cases out of ten, in order to satisfy your subject, you had to try and see him as he fancied himself, and what he fancied himself, was usually very different to what one had before one. I was being continually reminded of the famous lines :—

> "O, wad some Power the giftie gie us
> To see oursel's as ithers see us !"

If this were only the case with nonentities, it might

perhaps be pardonable, as it pleases their little selves and hurts no one else, but one feels one would like to buy them at our price and sell them again at theirs. When, however, it came from men of intelligence it was indeed laughable to notice the way they had of preening themselves in the hope that I would let them down lightly.

It is given to very few men to appreciate a caricature portrait of themselves, however good it may be, whereas it generally provokes much genuine mirth amongst their friends, behind their backs, *bien entendu.*

Caricaturing, as may be imagined, often leads to amusing incidents. I remember on one occasion doing one of a well-known Frenchman. He had peculiar teeth which gave much character to his laugh—in fact there was a tooth missing right in front. Of course I painted him as I saw him, minus a tooth. I had no intention of beautifying him in a cartoon. He was very offended when he saw the result. "Why should I paint him without teeth?" he asked. "It wasn't funny." I didn't know what to say. I couldn't very well reply that it wasn't my fault, when suddenly an idea seemed to have occurred to him. He left the room hurriedly saying he would be back in a few moments. On his return, he grinned significantly, when to my surprise I saw he had his full complement of teeth. He had forgotten, so he explained, to put his front tooth in that morning.

It sometimes happens that one comes across a man who is not so inordinately vain as to take exception to a bit of fun at his expense. In this connection, perhaps one of the most curious experiences I ever had with caricaturing was at a little place in France, where I was painting one summer.

There was a café where every one used to meet of a day. One afternoon at *l'heure de l'aperitif* I was with some of my friends when a very big and pompous individual entered and seated himself at

the table not far from us. He must have weighed close on twenty stone, and was altogether of so remarkable appearance that I could not resist the temptation of making a caricature of him at the risk of getting my head punched if he objected.

I did not happen to have my sketch book with me, so I began making a drawing on the marble-topped table we were sitting at. As it sometimes happens, he had a very easy face to catch, and in a very few minutes I had made an exaggerated likeness of him. It was evidently a happy effort, because everybody around burst out laughing when they saw it. Meanwhile my victim sat smoking stolidly and apparently unaware that he was being sketched, although once or twice I thought he must have heard the laughter at our table and guessed the cause of our hilarity. But he sat as still as anything, so I had every chance of getting him.

Just as I had finished the "patron" came across to have a look at it, and he said it was so good that he begged me not to rub it out, as he wanted to let some of his friends see it. I could not very well refuse, so it was covered up with a tablecloth.

The next day when I went into the café as usual the "patron" came up to me excitedly. He had something amusing to tell me, he said. "The client had bought the table." "Bought what table?" I asked in surprise. "The table you drew his caricature on, yesterday. He knew you were sketching him, and after you had gone he had a look at it, and was so delighted with it that he asked me if I would sell him the table so that he could take it away. I couldn't very well object, so it was fetched this morning." It afterwards transpired that the *consommateur* was a wealthy manufacturer living in a town not far off, and the Mayor of the place as well. Here was an instance of material appreciation of a bit of fun which was somewhat unexpected.

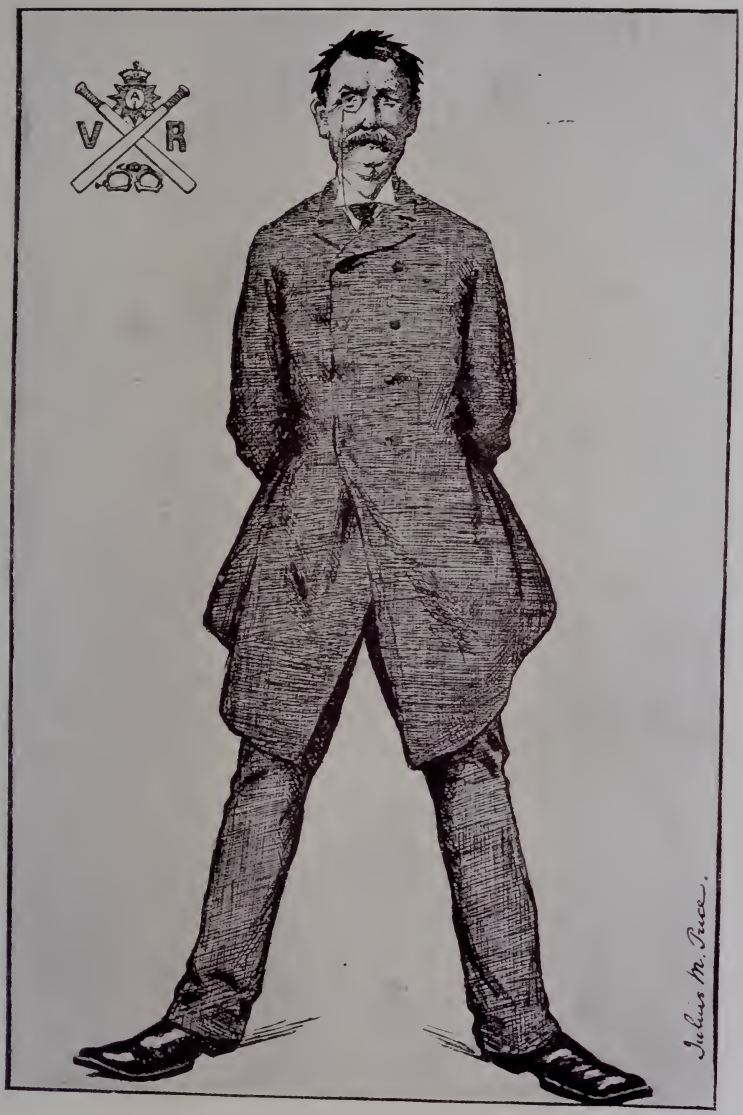
One does, therefore, come across men who have

not an atom of obnoxious vanity in their composition, and which explains their popularity. I remember after a big public dinner I was once at, a very genial old chap asking me if I would do a sketch for him as a souvenir. I said I would if he would let me do it on his shirt-front. He laughingly fell in with the suggestion at once, so he posed for me, and I made a large caricature of him on the spotless expanse of white linen, much to the amusement of the by-standers, as may be imagined. He was so pleased with it, I learned, that afterwards he had it cut out and framed.

In those days there seemed to be something continually turning up which provided work for one's pencil of an interesting nature, probably because photography had not yet even commenced to oust journalistic artists. So you could never tell where you might have a chance of being sent at a moment's notice, a railway accident, some public function, which were always grist to the mill if you liked rushing about, and one often found oneself starting for the most unexpected places.

Perhaps one of my most interesting experiences just then was at the time of the "Unemployed Riots." London was in a state of ferment, and Trafalgar Square on Sunday afternoons the rendezvous of all the most hot-headed Socialists in the Metropolis, whilst the authorities looked on benevolently. General Sir Charles Warren, of South African fame, was the head of the police, and had attempted to introduce a system of militarism, which had not been over-well received, hence the indecision with regard to taking action and to stop proceedings that had excited the wrath of all law-abiding citizens.

At last, on one Sunday, it was reported that the police, aided by the military, were going to stop the usual gathering in the Square. I was sent by the *Illustrated* to get some sketches; and I shall never



"SIR CHARLES WARREN WAS THE HEAD OF THE POLICE."

forget the experience. If I remember rightly, the meeting was to be addressed by Mr Hyndman, a prominent Socialist, and several others, and it was announced that it would take place in spite of the veto of the authorites, and it did.

When I got to the Square it was packed with a seething mass of frowsy, unwashed humanity. I wanted to get as close up as possible to the speakers ; but as they had stationed themselves on the parapet facing the National Gallery, it was no easy matter. However, I managed to gradually work my way through the crowd until I was right in between the fountains, when I realised it would have been better to have gone on to the roadway, as sketching was impossible in such a crush, so I turned to go back, but I might have as well attempted to go through a brick wall. Movement was impossible, so I had no option but to remain where I was. The din on all sides was indescribable. All of a sudden there were shouts that the cavalry and the police were going to clear the Square. I shall never in my life forget what happened then ; to say I was taken off my feet would be to describe it mildly—there was a frenzied struggle of every one to get away, and in an instant I found myself wedged in a veritable human vortex. The pressure was so terrific that I expected my ribs to give in, and my clothes to be torn off my back. Shrieks and curses rose on all sides, and I had an awful feeling that I was absolutely helpless, and was going to be crushed to death. The next few minutes seemed like hours, and I was beginning to feel I couldn't hold out any longer when the pressure began to cease gradually. How it came about I didn't know ; possibly some police barrier had been relaxed. Anyhow, after a time, I managed to elbow my way through the rabble, and at length found myself in the roadway, when I mentally ejaculated, "Thank God!" for I felt I had indeed had a narrow escape,

and I made up my mind not to be caught in a big crowd like that again in a hurry.

Early in the following week it was announced that special constables were to be enrolled to aid the authorities in maintaining order, so as not to have to make use of the military unless it was absolutely necessary. The *Illustrated* suggested it would be a good idea my joining, so I went to the Westminster Police Court and was sworn in before Mr Partridge, the magistrate, amongst many hundreds of young fellows, mostly belonging to the volunteers. Wristlets, similar to those worn by the police, armlets for use when on service, and truncheons were served out, and we were informed that our Division mustered the following Sunday morning in Kensington Palace Gardens. The authorities were not going to be caught "napping" a second time.

I forget how many "specials" there were, but it is certain that the mob was completely overawed by the preparations they saw were being made for its reception, and nothing whatever of an untoward nature happened all the afternoon beyond our being jeered at by the roughs. The various Divisions stood in close formation, ready for action, and hoping for the chance of going for the mob of so-called "Unemployed." We were stationed in St James's Park, and although it was interesting enough at first, especially the march through the streets, it ended by becoming very tedious standing about doing nothing.

No meeting took place in Trafalgar Square, in spite of the boasts of the Socialists. They were outwitted by Sir Charles Warren and by a stratagem so intelligent, yet so simple, that it must be mentioned. He simply filled the Square with police, standing shoulder to shoulder in serried ranks, so there was no chance for any procession to enter. Thus ended in peaceful quietude a day

that was in marked contrast to the rioting on the previous Sunday. There were quite a number of nice fellows in my Division, and as I was made an inspector *pro tem.*, I had plenty of opportunity to make sketches, and we all became very friendly.

A funny thing happened that night when I got back home. It was very late, and the streets, of course, deserted. Just opposite the studio I noticed a policeman standing over a drunken woman lying on the ground. He was trying to induce her to get up. I went over to see what was the matter, and found him doing his best to get the lady to accompany him to the police station. But all his efforts were in vain; she simply would not get on her feet, and declared she was going to sleep there whether he liked it or not, and although he was a strong, young fellow he could not get her to budge. I had been looking for a job all day, so I told him I was a special constable, and offered to lend him a hand. He laughingly accepted. With that he grasped hold of one of her arms, and I the other.

No sooner, however, had I touched her than it was as if the Parrot House at the Zoo had been disturbed. Perhaps it was she recognised that I was only an amateur policeman, for she set up a series of piercing yells which woke up the entire neighbourhood. I let go as though she had been red-hot and immediately she became quiet. The constable and I looked at each other; perhaps I touched her on a tender spot, thought I, and with that I caught hold of her again, differently, while he said gruffly, "Come, up yer get, we can't stop 'ere all night." But instantly, as though an electric bell had been started, the piercing yells and shrieks arose again. I should never have thought one woman could have made such a din. It was evidently no use my attempting to give him any assistance, so I let go and she lay as quiet as a log.

"I think," said the constable, "if you don't mind going round to the corner of High Street, you will meet one of our chaps, and he will come and give me a hand." Just at that moment he espied a constable coming round the corner, evidently attracted by the screams, and he came over to us. He turned out to be a sergeant. The finale then was brief. "Up you get, old lady," he said, and they both caught hold of her under her arms, none too gently, and she was on her feet in a trice. As they were taking her off she turned to me and vociferated at the top of her voice: "D'yer fink as 'ow I'd allow a beast like you to put 'ands on a perfect lidy like me? Not much. I'm a respectable married woman, I am, and don't you forgit it!"

A few months after my special constable experience, an idea occurred to me which was fraught with much consequence in my life subsequently. I cannot recall what it was suggested it to me, but I remember I was going over to Paris to see the *Salon* when I suddenly thought I might as well, if possible, combine work with pleasure, and pay my expenses out of it. Then, indeed, I should have an ideal holiday from an artist's point of view.

There were at the time several interesting events on the *tapis* in France; but first and foremost was the Boulangist movement, which was then in full swing, and the *brav' général* the man of the hour. I went to the *Illustrated London News* and told Mr Ingram I was going over to Paris, and asked if he would like me to get him some sketches from life of the popular hero. It did not take him long to make up his mind, and in a few minutes I had an *Illustrated London News* card duly filled in with my name, accrediting me as their special artist in Paris. Then I asked him if there were any objection to my doing some work for a daily paper at the same time. He had

no objection, so it only remained now for me to endeavour to carry out my idea. I therefore went to the *Pall Mall Gazette* office and boldly asked to see Mr Stead, the editor.

W. T. Stead was one of the men of the hour at that time, and had made a power of the *Pall Mall.* He had introduced many striking innovations in daily journalism, amongst others the illustrated interview.

I well remember the trepidation I felt when I was shown into the room of the great man, for I felt it was awful cheek my venturing to call on him at all, since I had never written a line in my life. However, he received me very affably. Editors were considered almost inaccessible in those days to outsiders; so I was in luck's way seeing him at all.

I plucked up courage, therefore, and told him I was going to sketch Boulanger for the *Illustrated London News*, and that I spoke French fluently, and would he like me to do an interview with him at the same time for the *Pall Mall*? "Have you had much experience at interviewing?" he asked me, in kindly tones, for he must have perceived that I was quite a beginner.

He was so sympathetic and friendly in his manner that I thought it best to be candid, so replied that this was absolutely my first attempt in journalism. This seemed rather to amuse him, and he gave me to understand that if I cared to do it on spec, and it was good enough to be used, he would be glad to have it. This was, perhaps, somewhat on the lines of the immortal resolution of the Committee of the Pickwick Club, though, of course, I could hardly have expected him to say more, so I agreed to have a try at it. Then, as though a thought had struck him, he asked, "Do you think you could get one with President Carnot as well, while you are over there?" Without hesitation, as though

it was quite a simple everyday matter, I replied that I saw no difficulty whatever, as I had many influential friends in Paris. "Well, then, if that's the case, and you care to, you might try to get some others as well —M. Eiffel, De Blowitz, Caran d'Ache, Campbell Clarke; they would all interest me, and I would like some sketches of them as well!" Of course, I agreed, and to my delight he wrote out a card on which was stated I was authorised to represent the *Pall Mall Gazette* in Paris for the next few weeks. This, therefore, was the first literary journalistic credential I received.

It was only when I got outside the office I began to realise the difficulty of my undertaking. It was not only the fact that it was my first attempt at interview work, but what bothered me was how I was going to get at the distinguished men whose names had been given me. I began to feel I had perhaps been somewhat precipitate. There was no certainty that my friends in Paris would help me. Of course I knew if I did not succeed I was under no obligation to go and tell Mr Stead I had failed, or, in fact, to call at his office again, but the idea of not being successful was not to be entertained for a moment, so I started for Paris with the firm conviction in my mind that I was going to do what I had undertaken, and as it turned out I accomplished it entirely without a hitch from start to finish. Although scarcely coming within the scope of this narrative of my Bohemian Life in London, a brief *resumé* of it may be of interest. My idea was to make the sketch whilst having the interview, and for the purpose I had got a sketch book of special shape and size made for me.

I soon made the discovery that in journalistic work it is better to rely on one's own initiative than on any outside assistance, which, more often than not, is but of hypocriphal value, so, after waiting for several days for introductions which

did not arrive, I took the bull by the horns and wrote personally to all the personages I wanted to interview, and in every case I got a favourable reply, making an appointment.

I remember particularly what an effect the arrival of the mounted orderly from the Elysée with a letter for me produced at the modest hotel in the Rue Pasquier where I was staying.

Having succeeded so far, it was now up to me to do the interviews if I could. It was at this juncture that I again realised the advantage I possessed in not being in the least impressed by pomp and circumstance. When I was ushered with much ceremony into the presence of the President of the Republic, I recollect my first impression was how much he resembled an old uncle of mine. This was sufficient to put me at once at my ease, so much so, in fact, that after a time, while I was making my sketch, I ventured to tell him of the likeness, and he laughed heartily.

He was a man of stiff and impassive demeanour, the very embodiment of dignity and self-consciousness, and this frigid appearance was heightened by the closely-buttoned frock coat, stiff, clerical-looking collar, and black tie which completely hid his shirt and made him look not unlike a prosperous undertaker. My unconventionality seemed to have imparted a touch of everyday human nature to what would otherwise have been but a formal and official interview, and we were soon chatting together in the most unrestrained and friendly manner, and when I had finished my work he asked me in the most cordial way if I would like to come to Madame Carnot's reception at the Elysée the following evening. Of course I accepted, and in due course the mounted orderly again rode up to my hotel with an official invitation, and, needless to add, I went.

Some of my artist friends — young fellows with no respect for dignity—on learning of the honour

conferred on me, insisted on escorting me that night to the entrance of the Elysée, where, with mock deference, and much to the great amusement of the sentries and the police on duty, they lined up on either side and saluted me gravely as I passed through the portal.

I felt somewhat embarrassed when I found myself inside the palace, for on all sides were resplendent uniforms and blazing decorations, whilst I, of course, was only in humble evening dress. The magnificent saloons were crowded, and the gorgeous toilets of the ladies added brilliance to the scene. I had always heard that the Presidential receptions were but tame and *bourgeois* affairs as compared with those at the Tuileries during the Empire, but what I saw around me was, I thought, certainly not lacking in impressiveness, although it was perhaps solely Republican, and the majority of these people not blue-blooded aristocrats.

I made my way upstairs slowly, for there was a big crush, to where the President and Madame Carnot received their guests at the entrance to the *salons*, and waited till my name was announced. The President, who was merely bowing stiffly and coldly to every one, was graciously pleased to extend his hand to me in quite genial fashion and introduced me to Madame Carnot as "l'artiste peintre de Londres." After a word of welcome from the lady I then passed on, and stood at the back watching the arrival of the guests.

It was all very prim and formal, as may be imagined, and after a time I found it somewhat dull, as I was quite alone, and in it but not of it. So after about an hour, when I noticed that people were taking their departure, I did likewise, and was not sorry when I found myself outside in my familiar Paris again. There was, to my mind something depressing in the world of diplomacy which I had just visited for the first time.

Things are very much changed in Paris since then, and nowadays it is as difficult for a foreign correspondent to be received by the President of the Republic — unless he has good influence to back him up, or is introduced by a personal friend —as it is to get into the presence of Royalty.

General Boulanger I interviewed at the very zenith of his power and popularity. I shall never forget that memorable night when the result of the election was definitely known. He was dining at Durand's at the corner of the Place de la Madeleine, and one could have walked down the Rue Royale over the heads of the people who were waiting for their newly found idol to appear. If he had only had just that little spark of pluck which goes to make a Napoleon or a Cromwell, he could have gone to the Elysée then and there, but probably there passed through his mind the chance of an over-zealous sentry and a sudden ending to his career, so he missed his opportunity and never got the chance again. His house in the Rue Dumont d'Urville was always thronged with his admirers and fortune-hunters, who would wait for hours on the chance of an interview.

My appointment was at the unearthly hour of 8 o'clock in the morning, but I was advised to get there much earlier than that if I wanted to make sure of seeing him.

When I saw him after waiting from 6 till close on 9 o'clock, instead of the fine dashing cavalry officer I had expected from the photographs sold of him everywhere, I found an elderly, frock-coated gentleman who might have been a prosperous merchant or the director of a successful trading company, certainly not one's conception of a popular hero. However, there was a charm in his manner which was particularly winning and doubtless explained his popularity. He received me in so friendly a fashion that I felt one could not help liking him.

I thought I would carry out my plan of sketching and interviewing him simultaneously. "I am very much occupied," he said, "you will have to catch me as well as you can," so I dodged about the room until I found a good position to sketch him from. I noticed certain gestures which struck me as being theatrical, which were doubtless calculated to impress me, as, for instance, he opened a letter, read it intently, and held it in his hand as though deep in thought. Then, as though he had taken a sudden resolve, he tore it up and with a deep-drawn sigh consigned it to the wastepaper basket. Other letters that he read through hastily, appeared to cause him annoyance, but all seemed to me to be done for effect. He knew I was watching him every moment.

Afterwards, taking me by the arm, he showed me over the house, which was practically the headquarters of the party, and I interviewed him whilst we walked round. I recollect how many photographs of him there were, in all poses and dress. He might have been a fashionable beauty. But there was a reason for it all. His dashing appearance on his famous black charger was one of his chief assets. When I came away after spending nearly two hours with him I felt that I had really done a good day's work, as I had made quite a lot of sketches, and had got a long and interesting interview.

Monsieur de Blowitz, the celebrated correspondent of the *Times* in Paris, was known facetiously as the "Friend of Emperors," for he was said to be on intimate terms with all the crowned heads of Europe. He lived in the Rue de Tilsitt and received me in the most extraordinary attire imaginable. It was a sort of compromise between pyjamas and the Turkish national costume, and of the most brilliant red, while he had a black fez on his scant locks, which gave him a still more grotesque appearance. He was a tiny little man, inclined to *embonpoint*, with an immense head. He was pleased

"YOU WILL HAVE TO CATCH ME AS WELL AS YOU CAN."

to let me sketch him, and whilst doing so I adroitly got, without his realising it, the replies to several questions I had written in my sketch book, and as he talked he gradually let himself go, and I found myself writing down matters of so important a nature that I wondered what he would say if he found I was taking notes as well as sketching him.

When I got back to my hotel and read it all over, I came to the conclusion that it would not be fair to publish it without his sanction, so I went back and saw him the following day. He laughed heartily at my ruse, and good-naturedly edited the interview himself. I may add that when this was published, it caused somewhat of a sensation, as it dealt intimately with the Parnell question, and was referred to in most of the London and provincial papers.

Monsieur Eiffel was building his famous tower then, and I interviewed him on the spot. He held Sunday "at homes" on the works. Every week the reception platform was nearer the heavens, and only those with cast iron nerves could venture up, for the lifts were not then installed.

Caran d'Ache, the famous humorous artist, and Campbell Clarke, correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, both received me in the most genial manner, and put no difficulties in the way of my accomplishing my object. In fact, I liked the work so much, and found it so pleasant, that I determined, should it be accepted by the *Pall Mall*, to devote my time to it in the intervals of black-and-white drawing and painting. Well, it was all accepted, and I remember Mr Stead facetiously remarked afterwards that I ought to consider him my literary accoucheur. This, therefore, was the commencement of my work as a scribe, and I never had cause to regret having made that trip to Paris.

CHAPTER XVIII

Artists' rendezvous in the Wood—Cheap restaurants in the West End—Soho in those days—Pagani's—Pellegrini and the Artists' Room—Veglio's—Reggiori's—Gatti's—The Monico—Its curious history—The cheapest dinner in London—The Café Royal—Verrey's—French and English billiards in Windmill Street—Music halls—Our Saturday night's dissipations—"Adventures" with the girls—Mad pranks—The baked potato merchant—An amusing joke—The bewildered girls—A curious bet—The wealthy waiter—"The Maiden's Prayer"—"Regulars"—The "street-walker" of those days—Extraordinary sights in the West End—An amusing skit—John Hollingshead's wit—Foreign women in Regent Street—The "last" 'bus—I make a conquest—Facetious 'bus-drivers—Liquid refreshment—Story of a "rum and milk"—Week-end boating—Painting at Cookham—Flirtation on the Bridge—The boastful Don Juan and the mysterious female—A splendid "spoof"—A delightful adventure—The launch party—Curious *dénouement*—Another adventure—Missing the last train—The good Samaritans—*L'incroyable.*

ALTHOUGH there were a few places in the Wood where one occasionally met artists of an evening, there were no real rendezvous for brothers of the brush and palette up there, so the only chance of seeing any one was to go round to the different studios if you wanted a yarn and a pipe. It was a poor substitute for *café* life, as may be imagined, and it also had the tendency to encourage one to indulge in liquid refreshment of a more enlivening nature than coffee, but it was something to do after dinner if one hadn't got a girl to meet, and one didn't want to play billiards or cards. Of course there was the Hogarth Club to go to if one felt so inclined, but to go down West seldom occurred to us, for unless one had plenty of money to spend,

or friends to visit, there was not much amusement in a long 'bus ride with a possibility of having to walk back again, if you stayed out too late, for a cab home was a rare luxury.

There were not many restaurants then in the West End where young fellows, like we all were then, not over-blessed with wealth, could dine cheaply and well. Soho was practically isolated; although there were one or two little places where they gave you a dinner for 1s. 6d. or 2s., there was no indication whatever that it would ultimately develop into the fashionable Bohemian quarter it has of late years. Curiously enough, although it has been stated that the necessaries of life have risen in price beyond all reason during the past twenty-five years, living seems to be far cheaper now than it was then. Of course, I only refer to restaurant life. Perhaps it will be said you don't get such good quality; that, of course, is a question into which I cannot enter, but the fact remains that one can get a dinner for less money now than you could then. There is no doubt that this satifactory state of things for the poor Bohemian has been brought about by competition, for where there were only a few cheap restaurants then, there are now scores existent, and others springing up everywhere in the West End, and only waiting to be discovered by some exploring journalist to be made popular.

In my St John's Wood days, perhaps the best known of the Bohemian dining-places was Pagani's in Great Portland Street, although at that time it was quite a small and insignificant little place compared with what it is now. It was to Pellegrini, the famous caricaturist of *Vanity Fair*, that the restaurant owed its initiation, as it were, in the Bohemian life, and he practically started its reputation for being quite the best place in London for Italian cooking and wines.

In those far-off days the restaurant grew not only in size, but in popularity, by leaps and bounds, and at the time I first knew it, one saw there many of the most distinguished artists and musicians in London.

It was about this time that Pellegrini and his friends formed the well-known "Artists' Room," which was a sort of club where they used to meet, and the walls to this day testify to the talent that would congregate there, for they are covered with sketches signed by famous names, all of which are made on the walls direct.

Pagani's was then the artistic rendezvous of London Bohemia, where one could be sure of a well-cooked veal cutlet *à la Milanèse* and a flask of excellent *chianti*, and it has maintained its reputation to this day as the leading Italian restaurant in the metropolis.

Another place where we would go when we wanted a change was Veglios in the Euston Road. It has long ceased to exist, but in those days it was also a great place of meetings for artists. It was largely frequented by the Fitzroy Square division, and for a time enjoyed considerable vogue, probably because you got dishes there you could not find on the menus elsewhere.

Of course there were several other places, Reggiori's in Chapel Street, Edgware Road, Gatti's under the Arches, and Gatti's in the Adelaide Gallery off the Strand. But the Monico was, perhaps, the most important of the popular *cafés* in the West End. It then only consisted of the present big hall and a billiard-room, which was the largest in London, with twelve tables, and had only been opened in 1877. It is said that it stands on the site of an old inn where one of the coaches used to start from formerly. For several years the entrance was through a coal-yard, and the Monicos had, somehow, managed to rub the owner the wrong way,

with the consequence that he would often leave carts blocking the entrance. He was, of course, free to do as he pleased, and nothing could be said, as he had the right of way, but it was very awkward for customers having frequently to push their way in past the dirty carts, especially on a wet night. This was where the principal entrance and *café* are now. It is difficult to realise the change that has been made. One used to meet at the Monico and play chess, then a very popular game, which was played in many places every evening.

The cheapest dinner in London was at a restaurant in Arundel Street. I forget how many courses they gave you, but I remember it included half a bottle of claret, a cup of coffee, and a liquor of brandy for 2s. You couldn't expect a really good dinner like that for less anywhere, but we couldn't always afford 2s., worse luck, so it was only now and then we patronised it. Occasionally, also, we might go on to the Café Royal, or Verrey's, after dinner, but these were amongst the expensive and *chic* places even for a humble cup of coffee, and they were not over-lively at night.

There was a very large billiard establishment in Windmill Street we used to go to now and again, as there were French tables there also, the only ones in London, but the establishment was *tres mal frequentée*, and rows were of constant occurrence. One of the worst fights I ever saw took place in this street, and one of the men died afterwards, I learnt. At Inman's in Oxford Street and Roberts' in Regent Street were private billiard-rooms we sometimes went to.

Music halls and, still less, theatres were not much in our line, perhaps because we didn't care to be cooped up all the evening, but one's plans for recreation were dependent on the ever-present question of ready cash, so one had to be careful

and act up to the Russian proverb—"If you can't get meat, you must be content with soup."

Still, there were times when we broke loose, damned the expense, and lived at the rate of £5,000 a year, for a couple of hours or so. Saturday nights were usually fixed on for this wild dissipation, if one may so call our mild orgies. If one were lucky and came across some nice girl or girls, who were not averse to a bit of fun, then indeed we did enjoy ourselves; but it was fun of a character consistent with our youth and boisterous spirits, and never connected with drink in any form, for the simple reason this form of amusement did not appeal to any of us, though none of my pals at the time were in any sense teetotallers. Mrs Grundy, the dear old thing, might, perhaps, have raised her funny eyebrows if she had heard of some of our escapades, but, after all, what was the harm? We were all of us bachelors, and if a pretty girl who had been in business all the week felt lonely and wanted to be made a fuss of over the week-end, what business was it of anybody's?—and studio walls told no tales, fortunately. Many of my old chums, staid married men now, who may perchance read these lines, will doubtless recall some of the delightful "adventures" we all had together in those never-to-be-forgotten days, when one didn't trouble so much about appearances or what other people thought.

Whenever I return to Paris and re-visit some of my old haunts, I am always agreeably surprised to find how one can re-construct the scenes of one's youth—to use a French phrase, and if one has not grown too fastidious as one has advanced in years, one can almost imagine oneself a youngster again, of course providing you have anything left of your youthful temperament.

It is quite different in London, perhaps for the reason that there has never been a Quartier Latin

of any description or anything resembling it over here. Anyway, the change that the past twenty-five years have brought about in the mode of living is so great that it is probably no exaggeration to state that we live in quite a different London, and what was possible in the days of which I am writing, would be considered the very worst of bad form nowadays, whilst I am inclined to doubt whether the present day young man would even unbend to the extent we did.

As I write this I recall one Saturday night down West. We were four of us, all men, and out with the avowed intention of having, with luck, a good time, and we did, for we all managed to pair off with quite nice girls. I remember mine was particularly good-looking. During the evening it was suddenly suggested that we should all go up to the studio of one of us and finish with a dance, and so forth. No sooner said than done. Hansoms were requisitioned, and in we all bundled. As we went along some one espied a baked potato merchant, and a brilliant idea occurred to one of the girls. "Why not have a supper as well, and take the man and his oven with us?" The weird notion was at once adopted and cabs stopped, a bargain made with the potato merchant, and off we started again midst roars of laughter, the potato-oven on its truck, fastened to the back of a cab, and the man hanging on next to the cabby. You couldn't do anything so mad as that nowadays in the electrically illuminated streets, however young one might be. What stupid things one did too, just to make the girls laugh.

I fancy we must have all been very youthful even for our age, as we were always up to some sort of lark. Can one imagine fellows, no longer lads, doing anything so imbecile, for instance, as the following?

One fine Saturday afternoon I was having a

stroll with a friend when we espied two smart girls coming towards us. When they got nearer we saw they were both very pretty, and I recognised one as an acquaintance of mine I hadn't met for some time. We stopped, I introduced my pal, and we stood chatting for a few minutes; then, as they said they had somewhere to go, we left them. As we walked away, my companion remarked how pleasant it would have been to have had them both up to tea in the studio, for, as he rightly said, one didn't often come across two girls, both so nice, together. I agreed with him and said that if we had thought of it we might have invited them that afternoon, but it was too late now. He then suggested my fixing something of the sort for the next day, as Sunday was generally pretty dull if you had nothing arranged beforehand. I said I would, when it suddenly struck me I hadn't got my friend's address to send her a line, as I knew she had moved since I last met her. "How stupid of me to forget to ask her for it." What was to be done?

We looked back; they were already far away in the distance, as we had been walking in the opposite direction. Then we saw a 'bus coming along, and the idea of a funny joke occurred to us. We couldn't very well get in to it, catch them up, and explain the reason for our afterthought, that would have been a bit too unblushing. There was no time to lose if we were to carry out the fun we had in our minds, so we jumped inside the 'bus, and in due course passed them, without, of course, their having seen us, then some little distance further on, where the road made a turn, we got down and started re-tracing our steps so as to meet them as they came along. It all went as we arranged. We pretended to be strolling along arm-in-arm, engaged in deep and earnest conversation.

The look of blank amazement on the two girls faces as they saw us coming towards them after

leaving us a half a mile back some minutes previously, can be imagined. My friend and I started with well-feigned surprise, and gave an exclamation of pleasure at meeting them again so soon, and stopped to shake hands. The girl I knew stared at me as though she thought I was a ghost, then faltered out, "Am I dreaming, didn't we leave you both down the road ten minutes ago?" "Of course, you did," I answered gaily. "Well, how is it we meet again here, when you were going the other way?" I couldn't keep my countenance any longer and burst into laughter, in which they both joined heartily when they heard how the mystery of our being in two places at once had been accomplished. "Fancy taking all that trouble just for the sake of having a joke on us," was the girls' comment. I didn't think it necessary to enlighten her as to the real reason for our energy, but as it turned out we were well repaid for it, and the tea party came off, and we spent a very delightful afternoon with them.

Here's another idiotic practical joke. Once, at the Monico, I think it was, I forget how it came about, but one of us made a bet that he would eat cream-cakes all through his dinner in lieu of bread. It doesn't sound very formidable, but chocolate éclairs, for instance, with *bœuf sauté* wants some determination to tackle, and entire absence of palate, while most people could not manage *meringue à la crême* with stewed mutton, but he won his bet, and wasn't ill afterwards either. The look on the face of the waiter, when he saw what was being accomplished, was a study in itself; he must have thought we were escaped lunatics!

By the way, mentioning waiters, there was one whom we usually patronised. He was reputedly quite rich, and all made out of his tips; at last he was reported as going to retire to a property he had bought in Switzerland. I asked him one day

how he had managed to amass so much wealth. His reply was succinct. "Between ze gentleman who give me twopence, and ze fool who give me fourpence, I am able to retire from ze business." Those must have been palmy days for waiters, judging from the number who started on their own account, and have made little reputations for themselves since.

Of course, it didn't always happen that we returned *accompagnés* on those Saturday nights, and if we were alone, we would endeavour to catch the last 'bus from Piccadilly Circus. This was facetiously known as "The Maiden's Prayer," by reason of the number of ladies who had had no luck during the evening, who usually returned to their homes in the Wood by it, and any one who was on the look-out for a cheap "adventure" was pretty certain to find it in this particular 'bus. After a time one almost got to know the "regulars," with their dyed hair, by sight, and to look on them as neighbours living in the same village. If it had turned out a wet night, it was almost pitiful to see them get in with their tawdry finery all bedraggled and mud-spattered, and the look of despondency on their painted and powdered faces, for Saturday was rent day as a rule, and there wouldn't be much chance of doing anything on a Sunday.

Somehow, and almost mysteriously, the entire class of street-walker of those days has disappeared, fortunately, for they were not pleasant objects as one saw them parading the West End, and I often wondered what the police was about to let them offer themselves in such brazen fashion in the most important quarter of the metropolis. It used to amaze foreigners, the sights to be witnessed of an afternoon and evening in Regent Street and round Piccadilly Circus, and more especially after all he had heard of the "goody-goodiness" of London as compared with Paris.

I remember an awfully funny sketch a newly-arrived French artist friend of mine made, which was suggested by this extraordinary apathy on the part of the authorities. It represented the corner by Swan and Edgar's in the height of the season, and on a fine afternoon. There was the usual crowd of well-dressed, respectable people, top-hatted, frock-coated paterfamilias with his wife and daughter, smart military men accompanying fashionable ladies, young girls, carriages driving past, and so forth, whilst amongst the throng were numerous street women strolling about in a state of complete nudity, yet without attracting any notice from the well-dressed people round them!

It was John Hollingshead, I believe, who made the witty remark that at this particular corner one had the best opportunity for observing the staple industry of the neighbourhood.

The number of foreign women about was not the least remarkable of the curious state of affairs, in fact one part of Regent Street was for a long time known as the "Calais side," and most of the creatures who patrolled it were so abandoned looking that one wondered how they ever managed to earn even a crust unless they picked up some drunken fool late at night. Of course, to young fellows like ourselves, this phase of West End life offered no attraction, and one simply passed them by without a glance, unless it happened to be something exceptionally scandalous in appearance; but I remember one night something funny happening to me.

There was always a big crowd waiting for the last 'buses, and on this occasion I was standing on the kerb with a friend when he remarked to me with a laugh that I had "made a conquest." Looking round in the direction he indicated, I saw a big, fat woman of about forty, who, as soon as she caught my eye, began to ogle me tenderly. She was evidently foreign, and must have weighed 17 stone if she

weighed a pound, and looked a positive mound of flabby flesh. The humour of the situation tickled me to such an extent that I must have sniggered at her, when, to my surprise, she evidently misunderstood my intention, and gradually edged her way towards me, with the clear purpose of making the first advance. I then noticed she had a brown paper parcel in her hand. "Go on, Jules, go in and win her, my boy. Don't let me stand in your way," said my pal, jocularly, as the lady adroitly succeeded in placing herself alongside me, without attracting notice from the bystanders. Just for the fun of the thing, I thought I would egg her on to see what would happen, so I sidled a little closer to her and waited, though it was with difficulty I kept my countenance.

She was considerably taller than I, and her elephantine proportions seemed overpowering. Suddenly turning her head she whispered in English, for she was a German evidently, "I have taken great fancy to you. Will you come home with me and be my lover?" I made no reply. An idea had occurred to me. Thinking, perhaps, I had not heard her, she repeated her remark, this time I turned to her, and, to her surprise, made a most voluble statement in gibberish, and looked towards my friend as though asking him to act as interpreter. He knew my love of a practical joke, so at once entered into the spirit of it, and told the lady I was a distinguished foreigner just arrived in England, and, as I could not speak English, he would be pleased to translate to me anything she wished to say. What was it she wanted of me? Though taken aback, she was nothing daunted, and reiterated her amatory sentiments, which were duly translated in gibberish to me. I shrugged my shoulders and gesticulated as though deprecating the honour.

"Tell him," she added, "I think him very nice boy and I have great fancy to him taken, and if

he will come with me, I will make him nice presents." Again this was translated; my friend and I were having, apparently, a heated discussion on the advisability of my accepting when the lady again chipped in, and said, "You tell him I have a nice lobster in this parcel and he shall it with me share, if he will come along. It is not often I take fancy so." At this moment, I saw our 'bus coming up, and as I didn't want to walk home, I made signs to my friend that we had better be off. "I regret, madam," he said to my admirer, "I can't persuade him to accept your offer. He says he is very sorry, and it is one of the disappointments of his life, but lobster never agrees with him," and then he added, "It does with me though, won't I do as well?" "No," she answered, almost bursting into tears, and, seizing my hand, squeezed it so hard that I thought she must be a professional strong woman. "If I can't have 'im, I will have nobody. I will go 'ome and eat mine lobster to mineself."

The 'bus-drivers, especially on this route, always struck me as being characters in their way, and the last journey at night appeared to develop their sense of humour somehow. There was always a lot of chaff going on between the jehus of the rival 'buses, which afforded great amusement to the passengers as a rule, whilst any individual who invited sarcasm and was not gifted with ready repartee generally came off badly.

One man I often noted as being particularly quaint in his remarks; at last he got quite a reputation for his impromptu wit, and one would almost wait for it. One soaking wet night, when the rain was simply pouring down, as he was waiting at the corner of Piccadilly Circus for his 'bus to fill up, and calling out his destination, as was usual for drivers to do in those days, his insistence on the fact that it was going to the "Zoo-logical Gardings and Regents Pawk," as though extra inducement to intending

passengers on such a night, was, I thought, the very essence of humour.

Although, as I have said, none of our fun ever consisted of indulgment in liquid refreshments, there were times when conviviality demanded a certain departure from this abstemiousness, but I don't think our bill for whisky and brandy ever amounted to much at the end of the year. There was no call to drown "dull care," as few of us had any then. I suppose it was that it didn't matter so much if you were hard up if you had no particular responsibilities. I recollect in this connection something rather amusing that happened one morning at our place.

We had had rather a festive night, and had not gone to bed until the early hours. In order not to break up the party, we had persuaded one of our friends who lived out of town to miss his last train and sleep in the spare bedroom which was in the front of the house. The following morning I went up about nine o'clock to wake him, when, to my surprise, I found him already up and dressed, and on expressing my astonishment at his being so matinal, considering the time we had got to bed, he told me he could not sleep after 8 o'clock, and, on looking out of the window, he could not resist the chance of a rum-and-milk "doing nothing," as he put it, at the "Eyre Arms" over the way; it seemed a pity to miss such an opportunity, so he had dressed and gone out to get it. "This was," he said, "the first time he had ever slept opposite a public house," so it explained his unwonted energy. I had an idea, however, that perhaps it was the pretty barmaid over there who also had something to do with it.

We went a good deal up the river during the summer—not that we were devotees to boating, for I fear none of my chums were in any sense athletes, but it was a good excuse to get away from town on Sunday, and, as a friend of mine had a house-

"PERHAPS IT WAS THE PRETTY BARMAID OVER THERE."

boat near Cookham, we generally went to see him. There is no more delightful spot anywhere on the river than here, and it is, in fact, one of the few places within easy distance of London that has not been spoilt by the day tripper, for the village is very little changed from what it was in Fred Walker's time. On one occasion I spent a month down there with an artist friend. It was in the early summer, and we enjoyed ourselves immensely, and painted, and boated, and bathed to our hearts' content, and went to bed early and slept like tops, as there was not much in the shape of dissipation in the quiet village, as may be imagined. We lived in a tiny cottage close to the common, and of an evening after supper would light our pipes and stroll up to the bridge, where there was always the chance of a little flirtation of a very mild description with the local lasses, as there were really some very pretty girls there, mostly the daughters of tradesmen of the village.

To them, the advent of spring meant emancipation after the dreary winter months, and with the warm days and the boating season came the smart London boys in flannels and blazers to talk to and cheer them up after the long dark nights. Unfortunately, however, there were never enough pretty girls to go round, and you were lucky if you came across one who was unattached.

You certainly wanted something in petticoats to stroll with through the fields by the side of the river in the lovely summer evenings. One could commune with Nature much better, I always thought, if you had your arm round a dear little girl's waist, and her fluffy hair blowing into your face. Without this companionship sylvan life offered but little attraction for me, at any rate.

Talking of the girls reminds me of a "spoof" my friend and I played on an artist who was living in the village when we were there. He was

quite a little chap, not bad-looking, but awfully conceited, especially where girls were concerned; in fact, he fancied that no one knew what a pretty girl was except himself, and he was constantly airing his opinions on the subject. He used to brag that he knew every good-looking girl for miles round, and that they had all offered to sit for him. Often would he tell us of his amorous escapades, probably to make us envy him his good fortune, but we had our doubts about them.

This was gradually getting on our nerves when I thought of a practical joke to play on him, and when I told my friend of it, he thought it was good enough to carry out at once. So we wrote him a letter on cheap notepaper in an illiterate sort of feminine writing, telling him that the writer would wait for him at 9 o'clock the next evening outside his house, as she so much wanted to know him, or words to that effect, and we signed it with an illegible signature. It looked just the kind of letter a country girl would write. When we knew he was out painting, I went and pushed the letter under his door so that we could be perfectly sure it reached him.

We generally met during the afternoon, and this time we made a point of it, and on separating, asked him if he would come in and have supper with us the next evening. "Thanks, very much," he replied, "but I can't. I'm engaged to-morrow night. Got something very special on. An awfully pretty girl to meet." "You are a Don Juan," I said chaffingly. "Where on earth do you find them all? We can't come across anything." "Oh," he replied airily, "there's a lot of it about. I get more than I want, and find it a bit of a nuisance knowing so many." "Appointment near here?" asked my friend tentatively. In an outburst of swagger, for he was evidently very pleased with himself, he told us he didn't believe in going a

long way to meet a girl; if she wanted to see him, she must come to him, so the rendezvous was close to his place. So far, the "spoof" had come off even better than we expected; it only remained now to carry it out completely. Next day I managed to borrow from our landlady, who was a good sort, her Sunday skirt, coat, and hat, as well as something that would answer the purpose of a thick veil. At half past eight I dressed myself up in them. It is perhaps necessary to mention that in those days I was fairly slim, my chest hadn't commenced to "slip down" as it has since, so when my toilet was finished, I really believe that I didn't look too masculine. My friend, who helped me to disguise myself, was convulsed with laughter as he surveyed me when I was completed. He said I had better be careful not to be seen, or I might get more than I bargained for. Our victim lived only a short distance from us, so there was not much fear of meeting any one; moreover, it was quite dark. We succeeded in getting out of the house without our landlady seeing us, and made our way stealthily to the trysting-place. As the clock struck nine I took my place under some trees opposite where he lodged. My friend hid himself a little way off where he could watch the result. No one was about, so I ran no risk of being noticed. There was a light in his room, and I could see him plainly pacing about impatiently. The window was wide open, so I gave a significant cough to attract his attention; he looked out immediately, and, seeing me, put on his hat and hurried to where I stood.

Coming up to me, he peered hard at me to get a glimpse of my face, but my thick veil effectively baffled his curiosity, so he seized me by the hand and exclaimed, "I received your letter, little girl" (he didn't reach much above my shoulder). "It was

too awfully sweet of you to want to know me, and to write. Tell me, where have we met, and what is your name?" I whispered softly, "Presently, dear." This seemed to embolden him, and, putting his arm through mine, he said, "Let's go for a walk, I know a lovely quiet place not far from here where we shall be away from everybody and you can tell me all about yourself, and let me look at your pretty face. I am simply dying to know who you are. Come along, it is just the very evening to be together, darling."

I pretended to hesitate, and murmured very softly, "I don't think I ought to." Then he tried to put his arm round my waist, and draw me towards him and kiss me, but I resisted gently. "Not yet, sweetheart," I whispered. As may be imagined, I had the greatest difficulty to prevent myself from giggling, as he was so full of conceit, thinking I was really smitten with him, for he took it all for granted, and that I was a simple village maiden ready to fall into his arms. There was a momentary pause; the little fellow seemed nonplussed. I could see my friend behind the trees close by making signs to me to let my Adonis embrace me and have done with it. This finished me. I couldn't keep my countenance any longer. With a peal of laughter I whipped up my skirt, and, showing my trousered legs, I ran off, whilst my friend emerged from his hiding-place and joined me. Next day our victim came round and tried to brazen it out, saying, with a feeble attempt at a laugh, that "he knew who it was all the time." But we heard no more of his escapades with the fair sex after this little take-down.

On another occasion when I was staying at Cookham I had a delightful "adventure" which I have always remembered, more especially as something out of the way occurred in connection with it. I had a fancy to put one of my sentimental

"A REAL RIVER GIRL, THE SORT TO MAKE YOU FALL MADLY IN LOVE WITH IN A FEW HOURS."

ideas on a large canvas, and with this laudable object in view had evolved a subject of a time-worn nature, which I was hoping to treat on somewhat original lines. It was necessary in order to carry it out with any chance of success to find a girl of the type I had in mind and induce her to sit for me, as I wanted to paint the entire picture *in situ* with my model against the actual background. One does not come across one's ideal just when one is seeking for it, as I have already pointed out, and I had been looking around in vain when a bit of luck came my way. Some friends of mine had taken a house near the village for the season. They were very hospitable people, and I was often invited there. They had two daughters, and a son about my age, and there were usually some visitors staying with them, so it made a cheery party. One day I was told that a school friend of one of the girls, who lived at Marlow, was coming over to tennis, and she turned out to be exactly the type of English girl I had been looking for. Tall, fair, and delightfully slim, and with a complexion like a peach, a real river girl, the sort to make you fall madly in love with in a few hours. I was, as I have said, on most intimate terms with the family, and dropped in whenever I liked. It struck me that, perhaps, I might be able to induce her, therefore, to sit for the picture, so I managed to have a walk with her round the garden after tea, and I told her all about it. To my delight, she was quite interested, and promised to write and let me know when she could manage it. I may mention that I had already discovered the very place to paint the picture in, a charming and secluded backwater just below the Quarry Woods, and so it was settled that she should walk along the towing path on the day she appointed and meet me at a spot she would tell me of when she wrote. She enjoined me to secrecy, saying that

"she knew her people would say it was very wrong of her to meet me at all, but, of course, no one but ourselves need know of it, so where was the harm?" With which argument I was, of course, in perfect agreement.

When we rejoined the family circle, I remember that, although I felt elated at my good fortune, I had the sentiment of being somewhat of a conspirator. "How lovely your roses look," remarked my fair companion casually to our hostess, as she let herself drop in a wicker chair, as though to explain our absence. I glanced towards her. She looked the very embodiment of girlish ingenuousness.

A couple of days later I received a letter from her fixing a rendezvous. So I got a boat, put my canvas and easel and painting things in it, and rowed up to meet her. I shall never forget my impression as I saw her coming towards me along the river bank. She was dressed entirely in white, a quite simple river frock, but its effect in the afternoon sunshine was ethereal. She looked a dream of a beautiful English girl.

I will not attempt to describe the delightful times we spent together after this meeting. They were idyllic, and I don't remember ever having painted *en plein air* under more poetic conditions. I have since those far-off days often passed the spot where we used to moor the boat, and abandon ourselves to the long afternoon of undisturbed happiness in the cool shade of the overhanging trees till the lengthening shadows warned us it was time to be returning; then, I remember, with a heavy heart, I used to pack up my paraphernalia, and row her back to the spot where we had met. I can see her now in my mind's eye, crossing the meadow, turning round now and again to wave me yet another and another farewell until she was out of sight.

Those were, indeed, never-to-be-forgotten hours,

and with all the charm of them was that they were so greatly in contrast to my studio life, for whilst there was the fascination of our meetings being of a clandestine nature, there was really nothing in them to which even that hard taskmistress, Mrs Grundy, could have taken exception. It was a delightful experience, in the course of which I managed somehow to paint a picture without her people ever getting to know of it. One thing, however, is certain, and that is that she never looked on our escapade as anything more than a harmless summer flirtation, for she was little more than a girl, and I was quite a young man without any serious thoughts at all in my head, at the time, on matrimonial subjects.

After we had been meeting thus for a week or so without having, as I thought, excited any suspicion amongst her people of what was going on between us, there occurred the curious incident I alluded to at the commencement of this little story. I forgot to mention that we had occasionally met at our mutual friend's house since that memorable afternoon when I had first been introduced to her, but, of course, she gave no sign of undue friendship towards me. I was Mr Price to her, and she was Miss So-and-so to me.

On the occasion to which I am about to refer, she had not been able to meet me for several days, and she had written to say she would come and sit for me the following afternoon, and how much she was looking forward to a lovely time together. That evening one of the young fellows who used to be always in and out of our friend's house came to my lodgings to invite me to go with them the following day on a launch party up the river. He told me that it was going to be a very jolly outing, as they were to picnic somewhere on the way, have tea on board, and finish up with a dinner on returning home.

It would have been difficult to imagine a pleasanter

excursion. The weather was delightful at the time and looked like lasting, so that the invitation was indeed an alluring one. Then he told me who was going to be of the party. "All the usual crowd of nice boys and girls, and, of course," he added, "Amy," which, we will say, was my girl's name. For a moment I thought he knew something, and that he mentioned her name purposely. I felt my back hair stiffening, but almost instantly I realised that it was over-sensitiveness that made me imagine an affront in what was probably only an innocent statement, so I made no remark. I began to wonder whether this sudden picnic would not have altered her arrangements to meet me in spite of her letter, so I thought I had better be on the safe side, as I should have liked to go on the launch, especially if she were going to be there also. I replied, therefore, that "I might have to go to town the next day for a few hours, so if I might leave it open I would come if I could." He said that he was fixing it all up himself, and that they were starting from the bridge at such and such a time, and that if I could manage to join them they would be delighted, so we left it at that.

I almost expected to get a note from Amy the next morning to put off her appointment, but there was none, so I decided not to go on the launch and to chance her being at our usual rendezvous. To my delight she was there, and we passed several hours together. The picnic had not appealed to her, and she preferred to come and sit for me, so had made some excuse to get out of going.

When at last it was time to be thinking of packing up, the sun was nearly setting. The entrance to the backwater in which we were esconced was masked, fortunately, as it turned out, by overhanging trees, for just as I was pushing out into the main stream, and had got the bows of the boat clear, we were startled by the whistle of a large steam launch

"— WE WERE VERY GREAT PALS, —"

coming rapidly towards us. There were loud cries of warning, and only just in time I managed by a great effort to stop my boat from being run down and probably cut in half.

As the launch swished past, I heard a well-known voice call out, "Isn't that Jules in the skiff?" To which some one else replied, "It is like him, but he's gone up to town to-day, so it can't be." Amy, luckily, was hidden by the bushes, or the incident would have been very awkward for both of us.

The following day I ran across the man who had come to me with the invitation. "You missed a splendid time, yesterday," he told me. "We had a lovely day and glorious weather. They were all very disappointed you could not turn up," and then, as though to rub it in still more, he added, "and, Amy especially asked after you." "Was she there then?" I asked nonchalantly. "Of course, she was, the party wouldn't have been complete without her," was his unabashed reply.

I recall another experience of my boating days, which ended in a curious manner.

One Sunday a friend had lent me his punt and I had taken a sweetly pretty girl out for the day. We were very great pals, and had spent some very good times together. We started from Weybridge and made a lovely trip up the River Wey, which was as secluded a spot as one could desire. It was like an exploration journey, we thought. I remember we took a hamper with us, and had a little picnic all to ourselves, so we passed one of the most joyous days imaginable. The weather was perfect, and I had a delightful companion, so what more could a fellow want? Everything was so idyllic that we were quite loth to return to the prosaic surroundings of the main stream, and it was only when the shadows began to lengthen that we decided it was time to think of the train. But we had reckoned without taking mishaps into con-

sideration. The River Wey is a tortuous and insignificant stream, and all of a sudden we got stuck right across it and in a most awkward position. Of course, there was no risk, as there are only a few inches of water, but it took me some little time to get clear, as my companion was more ornament than use in a punt, and when at last we got to Weybridge it was quite dark and much later than we had intended.

We lost no time getting to the station, when, to the horror of my companion, we learned that the last train for London had gone, and the telegraph office was closed. I shall never forget the look of consternation on her pretty face, for I forgot to mention she was a very nice, quiet girl, who lived at home with her people. We stared at each other in blank dismay. What was to be done? The porter to whom we addressed ourselves was evidently the village idiot before he took up his station job, judging from the view he took of our predicament, and he seemed to think it rather a good joke our being so worried about it; perhaps to him it was not an unusual thing for young couples to lose their last train home—anyhow, all he could suggest was that there was an inn close by and that we had "better make a night of it" —or words to that effect—"since there was no chance of our getting back to town unless we caught the mail at 3 o'clock in the morning."

We left him and wandered down the road, and out in the darkness my companion completely broke down and sobbed like a child. What would her people think? They were always a bit suspicious of me, and she wouldn't have had this happen for worlds; they would be waiting up all night for her, and so forth. I tried my best to console her. "Accidents would happen," I told her, but I felt quite nonplussed, for I hadn't thought she would take it so seriously. Then I remembered the

early morning train. If we managed to catch that, it would get us to town at an unearthly hour, it is true, but better than staying away all night. She eagerly jumped at this suggestion, but the question was, where to go until it was time to get back to the station, as it was only 10 o'clock then.

We couldn't very well walk about all night. An idea occurred to me, and I went to the hotel close by, and saw the proprietor, to whom I explained our predicament. He looked, and was, a real good fellow. He called his wife, a kind, motherly person, and she was most sympathetic when she saw my pretty companion's tear-stained face. But they were closing for the night, she said. She and her husband went aside and had a talk together, and then told us that they were going to bed, but would let us stay in their sitting-room until it was time to go to the station, and would trust to us to put out the gas and shut the outer door quietly, when we left. Such kindness and confidence, on the part of people who did not even know who we were, was so unexpected, that we neither of us knew how sufficiently to express our thanks.

We were shown into a cosy parlour, and the landlord said he was going to leave us a bite of something on the sideboard, in case we felt hungry before we started, and to cap it all, refused to take a penny piece for what they were doing for us, as it was after closing time, they said. They were, indeed, good Samaritans. After they had bade us good-night, and we found ourselves alone, my companion threw her arms round me, and kissed me for very joy of our having found a way out of the predicament. We had nearly five hours before us, and our only fear now was that we might fall asleep, and not wake up in time, so we determined to take no risks, and although we were both very tired we managed to keep awake somehow, and caught the train, so it all ended without further misadventure.

The funniest part of it all, what in France would be ycelpt *l'incroyable*, was that we sat there all those hours, in separate armchairs, until it was time to go, for all the world like two Sunday-school children. How this was I don't quite know, but so far as I was concerned, such a thing as love-making never entered my head. I remember I said afterwards that it was her fault, but she did not agree. She had put it down, she told me, to my nervousness about not missing the train. For a long time after I pondered over her remark, and even now I recall that night at Weybridge with a twinge of vain regret.

CONCLUSION

Uneventful times in the studio — "Black and white" artists and "stock" drawings—My fondness for France—Le Guilvinec—I paint a religious subject—Cheapness of living in the village—Ending of my Bohemian days—What brought about the change—The Wiggins Expedition to Northern Siberia—Mr Ingram suggests my accompanying it as his "special artist"—Sir Frederick Leighton's friendship—Mr Ingram's generous policy—I start on my big journey through the Arctic regions—Siberia, Mongolia, and China—My eighteen months' absence from England—I return to London—Enough of "roughing it" for the time—I move from St John's Wood into the West End.

As may be imagined, studio life, whilst occasionally providing incidents of a sufficiently interesting character to bear recounting, is not entirely made up of "events," therefore in endeavouring to recall the happenings of the years of which I have been writing, it is obvious that there were times when for months all was singularly colourless. Episodes, even of a tender nature, have always seemed to me to come about in cycles. I was, as it turned out, on the eve of one of the big "events" of my career, as will be seen, and for the moment I was marking time, as it were.

Meanwhile I was not idle in my studio. A "black and white" artist could, in those days, generally manage to fill in his time. "Stock" drawings—*i.e.*, not for immediate publication—were in demand, and if I struck a good subject it was pretty nearly certain that the *Illustrated* would take it. The "stock" drawing is, alas, practically a thing of the past in these days of photography.

My fondness for France and anything French generally lured me across the Channel for my summer outing. A little place called Le Guilvinec, on the coast of Finistère, attracted me just then, and strange as it may have seemed to those who were interested in my work, and who knew my temperament, I painted a religious subject there called "The Viatique," and the village priest was so interested in it that he actually posed for me on the seashore, so there was no difficulty in getting my other models.

I exhibited this picture at the Royal Academy and the *Salon*, and it eventually received a Medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1900. I always recollect Le Guilvinec as the cheapest place to live in I ever struck. They charged me four francs a day *en pension*, which included excellent white and red wine and coffee and cognac after lunch and dinner. Fresh sardines were a standing dish, and *langoustes* were so plentiful that one could have them every day. I don't suppose that in these motor days any place like this exists anywhere at anything like the price.

I now come to the period which I have always considered practically marked the conclusion of my real Bohemian days in London. Although the bachelor artist is always more or less a Bohemian, in my case at this particular stage there was, as will be seen, a big break in the continuity of my career as a painter, that so completely severed my connection with studio life that when I returned to it after an absence of nearly eighteen months it was to settle down in the West End under quite different conditions. I will, however, briefly narrate what brought about this change.

The celebrated voyage of Captain Wiggins in 1887, when he successfully accomplished the feat of navigating a steamer (the *Phœnix*) across the Kara Sea and up the River Yenisei to the city of Yeniseisk, is too well remembered for it to be

"I PAINTED A RELIGIOUS SUBJECT THERE CALLED 'THE VIATIQUE.'"

necessary for me to recapitulate an exploit which was destined to become historic, solving as it did the much-vexed question of the practicability of establishing commercial relations between England and Siberia *viâ* the Arctic Ocean and the Kara Sea.

This successful expedition, opening up such immense possibilities, naturally encouraged its financial promoters to follow it up by another and much more important one. Towards the end of July in the following year, therefore, the *Labrador*, a powerful wooden steamer specially built for Arctic work, was despatched to the mouth of the Yenisei with a cargo of "all sorts" with which to try the Siberian market; the *Phœnix*, which had been laid up for the winter at Yeniseisk, being commissioned to proceed down the river and fetch back the cargo brought out by the *Labrador*, the latter vessel being too large to be able to get such a distance from the estuary. For all this special permission had naturally to be got from the Russian Government; but so far from making objections or putting any obstacles in the way of the scheme, the officials, advised, of course, from headquarters, lent every assistance in their power and showed a most friendly spirit.

Through a diversity of causes, into which it is not necessary to enter here, the expedition failed to accomplish its purpose, and the *Labrador* returned to England without having crossed the Kara Sea at all. An ordinary man would have been discouraged, at any rate for a time, by such a failure; but Wiggins was not of that stuff. Nothing daunted, he at once began trying to raise "the sinews of war" for a fresh expedition, and was so successful (such confidence had his friends in him), that the following year the *Labrador* once again started for the far north-east, but only to meet with another failure, though this time the failure, it was proved

afterwards, could have been easily averted. In fact, so conclusively was this proved, that, emboldened with the knowledge of how near it had been to being a success, a syndicate of rich and influential London men was without difficulty got together, and it was at once decided that two ships should be sent out the following year, and that everything possible should be done to ensure success. This time there were no half-hearted measures; money was forthcoming, and with it a renewed enthusiasm in the scheme which, I may add parenthetically, helped not a little to bring about its eventually satisfactory result; this, notwithstanding the fact that the expedition started handicapped by the untoward absence (owing to his having met with shipwreck on his way to join us) of Captain Wiggins, the leading spirit of the project.

Talking about Russia one morning with Mr Ingram at the office of the *Illustrated London News*, he suddenly suggested my going out as their "special artist" with this expedition. The love of travel and the spirit of adventure are so strong in me, that, without the slightest hesitation, I eagerly caught at the idea; in fact, had he proposed my riding across the Sahara on a bicycle, I should probably have jumped at it with just as much alacrity.

Well, to cut a long story short, after a lot of correspondence had passed between us, the "Anglo-Siberian Trading Syndicate" agreed to take me, subject to certain restrictions as to publication of sketches and matter relating to the expedition, and to land me eventually, if all went well, at the city of Yeniseisk, in the heart of Siberia.

Sir Frederick Leighton proved himself an invaluable friend at this juncture, as there was some difficulty in a press-man entering Russia, as it were, by the back-door. He interceded personally on my behalf with Sir Robert Morier, our Ambassador

in St Petersburg, so I had no difficulty in getting my passport from the Russian Government.

On my taking a map of my route down to the office, and asking Mr Ingram where I was to go if I ever found myself there, "You can go wherever you like, so long as you send us plenty of interesting sketches for the paper," was his generous reply. With liberty, therefore, to roam all over the world, so to speak, and with unlimited time and plenty of means at my disposal, I started on a journey which kept me away from England, as I have said, nearly eighteen months, and during the course of which I traversed the whole of Siberia from north to south, Mongolia, and China.

In the wildest dreams of my youth I could not have imagined a more wonderful journey.

This practically ended my Bohemian days in London, for on my return to London, after so long an absence, I found, as might have been expected, that my ideas were much changed, and that somehow the free-and-easy life of St John's Wood no longer offered the same attraction to me as of old, perhaps because I had had enough of roughing it for the time. Anyhow, my tenancy at No. 3 Blenheim Place having expired, I thought I would try what living under less "artistic" conditions meant, so decided to move into the West End, and took a small studio and flat in Glasshouse Street.

I well recollect the curious impression I had when, on the day after moving into my new quarters, I found myself in Piccadilly Circus at 10 o'clock in the morning. It was practically a new world I found myself in as compared with the rural quietude of the Wood, and I realised how completely I had severed with my old Bohemian life in London.

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